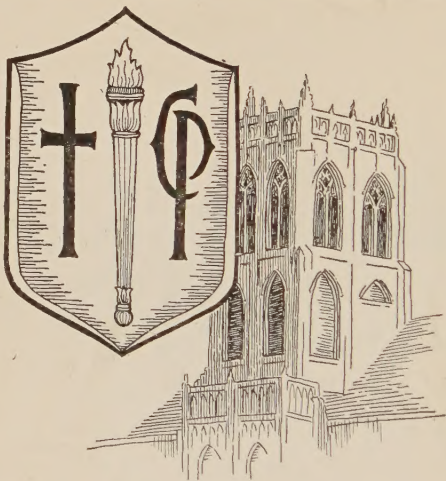


ROME

ZOLA



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ROME



ROME

BY

ÉMILE ZOLA

AUTHOR OF "LOURDES," "LA DÉBÂCLE," ETC.

SOLE AUTHORISED VERSION IN THE ENGLISH
LANGUAGE

TRANSLATED BY

ERNEST ALFRED VIZETELLY

VOLUME I

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PREFACE

IN submitting to the English-speaking public this second volume of M. Zola's trilogy "Lourdes, Rome, Paris," I have no prefatory remarks to offer on behalf of the author, whose views on Rome, its past, present, and future, will be found fully expounded in the following pages. That a book of this character will, like its forerunner "Lourdes," provoke considerable controversy is certain, but comment or rejoinder may well be postponed until that controversy has arisen. At present then I only desire to say, that in spite of the great labour which I have bestowed on this translation, I am sensible of its shortcomings, and in a work of such length, such intricacy, and such a wide range of subject, it will not be surprising if some slips are discovered. Any errors which may be pointed out to me, however, shall be rectified in subsequent editions. I have given, I think, the whole essence of M. Zola's text; but he himself has admitted to me that he has now and again allowed his pen to run away with him, and thus whilst sacrificing nothing of his sense I have at times abbreviated his phraseology

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ROME

I

THE train had been greatly delayed during the night between Pisa and Civita Vecchia, and it was close upon nine o'clock in the morning when, after a fatiguing journey of twenty-five hours' duration, Abbé Pierre Froment at last reached Rome. He had brought only a valise with him, and, springing hastily out of the railway carriage amidst the scramble of the arrival, he brushed the eager porters aside, intent on carrying his trifling luggage himself, so anxious was he to reach his destination, to be alone, and look around him. And almost immediately, on the Piazza dei Cinquecento, in front of the railway station, he climbed into one of the small open cabs ranged alongside the foot-walk, and placed the valise near him after giving the driver this address:

“Via Giulia, Palazzo Boccanera.”¹

It was a Monday, the 3rd of September, a beautifully bright and mild morning, with a clear sky overhead. The cabby, a plump little man with sparkling eyes and white teeth, smiled on realising by Pierre's accent that he had to deal with a French priest. Then he

¹ Boccanera mansion, Julia Street.

whipped up his lean horse, and the vehicle started off at the rapid pace customary to the clean and cheerful cabs of Rome. However, on reaching the Piazza delle Terme, after skirting the greenery of a little public garden, the man turned round, still smiling, and pointing to some ruins with his whip,

“The baths of Diocletian,” said he in broken French, like an obliging driver who is anxious to court favour with foreigners in order to secure their custom.

Then, at a fast trot, the vehicle descended the rapid slope of the Via Nazionale, which dips down from the summit of the Viminalis,¹ where the railway station is situated. And from that moment the driver scarcely ceased turning round and pointing at the monuments with his whip. In this broad new thoroughfare there were only buildings of recent erection. Still, the wave of the cabman’s whip became more pronounced and his voice rose to a higher key, with a somewhat ironical inflection, when he gave the name of a huge and still chalky pile on his left, a gigantic erection of stone, overladen with sculptured work — pediments and statues.

“The National Bank!” he said.

Pierre, however, during the week which had followed his resolve to make the journey, had spent wellnigh every day in studying Roman topography in maps and books. Thus he could have directed his steps to any given spot without inquiring his way, and he antici-

¹ One of the seven hills on which Rome is built. The other six are the Capitoline, Aventine, Quirinal, Esquiline, Caelian, and Palatine. These names will perforce frequently occur in the present narrative.

pated most of the driver's explanations. At the same time he was disconcerted by the sudden slopes, the perpetually recurring hills, on which certain districts rose, house above house, in terrace fashion. On his right-hand clumps of greenery were now climbing a height, and above them stretched a long bare yellow building of barrack or convent-like aspect.

"The Quirinal, the King's palace," said the driver.

Lower down, as the cab turned across a triangular square, Pierre, on raising his eyes, was delighted to perceive a sort of aërial garden high above him—a garden which was upheld by a lofty smooth wall, and whence the elegant and vigorous silhouette of a parasol pine, many centuries old, rose aloft into the limpid heavens. At this sight he realised all the pride and grace of Rome.

"The Villa Aldobrandini," the cabman called.

Then, yet lower down, there came a fleeting vision which decisively impassioned Pierre. The street again made a sudden bend, and in one corner, beyond a short dim alley, there was a blazing gap of light. On a lower level appeared a white square, a well of sunshine, filled with a blinding golden dust; and amidst all that morning glory there arose a gigantic marble column, gilt from base to summit on the side which the sun in rising had laved with its beams for wellnigh eighteen hundred years. And Pierre was surprised when the cabman told him the name of the column, for in his mind he had never pictured it soaring aloft in such a dazzling cavity with shadows all around. It was the column of Trajan.

The Via Nazionale turned for the last time at the

foot of the slope. And then other names fell hastily from the driver's lips as his horse went on at a fast trot. There was the Palazzo Colonna, with its garden edged by meagre cypresses; the Palazzo Torlonia, almost ripped open by recent "improvements"; the Palazzo di Venezia, bare and fearsome, with its crenelated walls, its stern and tragic appearance, that of some fortress of the middle ages, forgotten there amidst the commonplace life of nowadays. Pierre's surprise increased at the unexpected aspect which certain buildings and streets presented; and the keenest blow of all was dealt him when the cabman with his whip triumphantly called his attention to the Corso, a long narrow thoroughfare, about as broad as Fleet Street,¹ white with sunshine on the left, and black with shadows on the right, whilst at the far end the Piazza del Popolo (the Square of the People) showed like a bright star. Was this, then, the heart of the city, the vaunted promenade, the street brimful of life, whither flowed all the blood of Rome?

However, the cab was already entering the Corso Vittorio Emanuele, which follows the Via Nazionale, these being the two piercings effected right across the olden city from the railway station to the bridge of St'. Angelo. On the left-hand the rounded apsis of the Gesù church looked quite golden in the morning brightness. Then, between the church and the heavy Altieri palace which the "improvers" had not dared to demolish, the street became narrower, and one entered

¹ M. Zola likens the Corso to the Rue St. Honoré in Paris, but I have thought that an English comparison would be preferable in the present version. — *Trans.*

into cold, damp shade. But a moment afterwards, before the façade of the Gesù, when the square was reached, the sun again appeared, dazzling, throwing golden sheets of light around; whilst afar off at the end of the Via di Ara Cœli, steeped in shadow, a glimpse could be caught of some sunlit palm-trees.

“That’s the Capitol yonder,” said the cabman.

The priest hastily leant to the left, but only espied the patch of greenery at the end of the dim corridor-like street. The sudden alternations of warm light and cold shade made him shiver. In front of the Palazzo di Venezia, and in front of the Gesù, it had seemed to him as if all the night of ancient times were falling icily upon his shoulders; but at each fresh square, each broadening of the new thoroughfares, there came a return to light, to the pleasant warmth and gaiety of life. The yellow sunflashes, in falling from the house fronts, sharply outlined the violet shadows. Strips of sky, very blue and very benign, could be perceived between the roofs. And it seemed to Pierre that the air he breathed had a particular savour, which he could not yet quite define, but it was like that of fruit, and increased the feverishness which had possessed him ever since his arrival.

The Corso Vittorio Emanuele is, in spite of its irregularity, a very fine modern thoroughfare; and for a time Pierre might have fancied himself in any great city full of huge houses let out in flats. But when he passed before the Cancelleria,¹ Bramante’s masterpiece, the typical monument of the Roman Renas-

¹ Formerly the residence of the Papal Vice-Chancellors.

cence, his astonishment came back to him and his mind returned to the mansions which he had previously espied, those bare, huge, heavy edifices, those vast cubes of stone-work resembling hospitals or prisons. Never would he have imagined that the famous Roman "palaces" were like that, destitute of all grace and fancy and external magnificence. However, they were considered very fine and must be so; he would doubtless end by understanding things, but for that he would require reflection.¹

All at once the cab turned out of the populous Corso Vittorio Emanuele into a succession of winding alleys, through which it had difficulty in making its way. Quietude and solitude now came back again; the olden city, cold and somniferous, followed the new city with its bright sunshine and its crowds. Pierre remembered the maps which he had consulted, and realised that he was drawing near to the Via Giulia, and thereupon his curiosity, which had been steadily increasing, augmented to such a point that he suffered from it, full of despair at not seeing more and learning more at once. In the feverish state in which he had found himself ever since leaving the station, his astonishment at not finding things such as he had expected, the many shocks that his imagination had received, aggravated his passion beyond endurance, and brought him an acute desire to satisfy himself immediately. Nine o'clock had struck but a few minutes previously, he had the whole morning before him to repair to the Boccanera palace, so why should he not at once drive

¹ It is as well to point out at once that a palazzo is not a palace as we understand the term, but rather a mansion. — *Trans.*

to the classic spot, the summit whence one perceives the whole of Rome spread out upon her seven hills? And when once this thought had entered into his mind it tortured him until he was at last compelled to yield to it.

The driver no longer turned his head, so that Pierre rose up to give him this new address: "To San Pietro in Montorio!"

On hearing him the man at first looked astonished, unable to understand. He indicated with his whip that San Pietro was yonder, far away. However, as the priest insisted, he again smiled complacently, with a friendly nod of his head. All right! For his own part he was quite willing.

The horse then went on at a more rapid pace through the maze of narrow streets. One of these was pent between high walls, and the daylight descended into it as into a deep trench. But at the end came a sudden return to light, and the Tiber was crossed by the antique bridge of Sixtus IV, right and left of which stretched the new quays, amidst the ravages and fresh plaster-work of recent erections. On the other side of the river the Trastevere district also was ripped open, and the vehicle ascended the slope of the Janiculum by a broad thoroughfare where large slabs bore the name of Garibaldi. For the last time the driver made a gesture of good-natured pride as he named this triumphal route.

"Via Garibaldi!"

The horse had been obliged to slacken its pace, and Pierre, mastered by childish impatience, turned round to look at the city as by degrees it spread out and re-

vealed itself behind him. The ascent was a long one; fresh districts were ever rising up, even to the most distant hills. Then, in the increasing emotion which made his heart beat, the young priest felt that he was spoiling the contentment of his desire by thus gradually satisfying it, slowly and but partially effecting his conquest of the horizon. He wished to receive the shock full in the face, to behold all Rome at one glance, to gather the holy city together, and embrace the whole of it at one grasp. And thereupon he mustered sufficient strength of mind to refrain from turning round any more, in spite of the impulses of his whole being.

There is a spacious terrace on the summit of the incline. The church of San Pietro in Montorio stands there, on the spot where, as some say, St. Peter was crucified. The square is bare and brown, baked by the hot summer suns; but a little further away in the rear, the clear and noisy waters of the Acqua Paola fall bubbling from the three basins of a monumental fountain amidst sempiternal freshness. And alongside the terrace parapet, on the very crown of the Trastevere, there are always rows of tourists, slim Englishmen and square-built Germans, agape with traditional admiration, or consulting their guide-books in order to identify the monuments.

Pierre sprang lightly from the cab, leaving his valise on the seat, and making a sign to the driver, who went to join the row of waiting cabs, and remained philosophically seated on his box in the full sunlight, his head drooping like that of his horse, both resigning themselves to the customary long stoppage.

Meantime Pierre, erect against the parapet, in his tight black cassock, and with his bare feverish hands nervously clenched, was gazing before him with all his eyes, with all his soul. Rome! Rome! the city of the Cæsars, the city of the Popes, the Eternal City which has twice conquered the world, the predestined city of the glowing dream in which he had indulged for months! At last it was before him, at last his eyes beheld it! During the previous days some rain-storms had abated the intense August heat, and on that lovely September morning the air had freshened under the pale blue of the spotless far-spreading heavens. And the Rome that Pierre beheld was a Rome steeped in mildness, a visionary Rome which seemed to evaporate in the clear sunshine. A fine bluey haze, scarcely perceptible, as delicate as gauze, hovered over the roofs of the low-lying districts; whilst the vast Campagna, the distant hills, died away in a pale pink flush. At first Pierre distinguished nothing, sought no particular edifice or spot, but gave sight and soul alike to the whole of Rome, to the living colossus spread out below him, on a soil compounded of the dust of generations. Each century had renewed the city's glory as with the sap of immortal youth. And that which struck Pierre, that which made his heart leap within him, was that he found Rome such as he had desired to find her, fresh and youthful, with a volatile, almost incorporeal, gaiety of aspect, smiling as at the hope of a new life in the pure dawn of a lovely day.

And standing motionless before the sublime vista, with his hands still clenched and burning, Pierre in a

few minutes again lived the last three years of his life. Ah! what a terrible year had the first been, spent in his little house at Neuilly, with doors and windows ever closed, burrowing there like some wounded animal suffering unto death. He had come back from Lourdes with his soul desolate, his heart bleeding, with nought but ashes within him. Silence and darkness fell upon the ruins of his love and his faith. Days and days went by, without a pulsation of his veins, without the faintest gleam arising to brighten the gloom of his abandonment. His life was a mechanical one; he awaited the necessary courage to resume the tenor of existence in the name of sovereign reason, which had imposed upon him the sacrifice of everything. Why was he not stronger, more resistant, why did he not quietly adapt his life to his new opinions? As he was unwilling to cast off his cassock, through fidelity to the love of one and disgust of backsliding, why did he not seek occupation in some science suited to a priest, such as astronomy or archæology? The truth was that something, doubtless his mother's spirit, wept within him, an infinite, distracted love which nothing had yet satisfied and which ever despaired of attaining contentment. Therein lay the perpetual suffering of his solitude: beneath the lofty dignity of reason regained, the wound still lingered, raw and bleeding.

One autumn evening, however, under a dismal rainy sky, chance brought him into relations with an old priest, Abbé Rose, who was curate at the church of Ste. Marguerite, in the Faubourg St. Antoine. He went to see Abbé Rose in the Rue de Charonne, where in the depths of a damp ground floor he had trans-

formed three rooms into an asylum for abandoned children, whom he picked up in the neighbouring streets. And from that moment Pierre's life changed, a fresh and all-powerful source of interest had entered into it, and by degrees he became the old priest's passionate helper. It was a long way from Neuilly to the Rue de Charonne, and at first he only made the journey twice a week. But afterwards he bestirred himself every day, leaving home in the morning and not returning until night. As the three rooms no longer sufficed for the asylum, he rented the first floor of the house, reserving for himself a chamber in which ultimately he often slept. And all his modest income was expended there, in the prompt succouring of poor children; and the old priest, delighted, touched to tears by the young devoted help which had come to him from heaven, would often embrace Pierre, weeping, and call him a child of God.

It was then that Pierre knew want and wretchedness — wicked, abominable wretchedness; then that he lived amidst it for two long years. The acquaintance began with the poor little beings whom he picked up on the pavements, or whom kind-hearted neighbours brought to him now that the asylum was known in the district — little boys, little girls, tiny mites stranded on the streets whilst their fathers and mothers were toiling, drinking, or dying. The father had often disappeared, the mother had gone wrong, drunkenness and debauchery had followed slack times into the home; and then the brood was swept into the gutter, and the younger ones half perished of cold and hunger on the footways, whilst their elders

betook themselves to courses of vice and crime. One evening Pierre rescued from the wheels of a stone-dray two little nippers, brothers, who could not even give him an address, tell him whence they had come. On another evening he returned to the asylum with a little girl in his arms, a fair-haired little angel, barely three years old, whom he had found on a bench, and who sobbed, saying that her mother had left her there. And by a logical chain of circumstances, after dealing with the fleshless, pitiful fledglings ousted from their nests, he came to deal with the parents, to enter their hovels, penetrating each day further and further into a hellish sphere, and ultimately acquiring knowledge of all its frightful horror, his heart meantime bleeding, rent by terrified anguish and impotent charity.

Oh! the grievous City of Misery, the bottomless abyss of human suffering and degradation—how frightful were his journeys through it during those two years which distracted his whole being! In that Ste. Marguerite district of Paris, in the very heart of that Faubourg St. Antoine, so active and so brave for work, however hard, he discovered no end of sordid dwellings, whole lanes and alleys of hovels without light or air, cellar-like in their dampness, and where a multitude of wretches wallowed and suffered as from poison. All the way up the shaky staircases one's feet slipped upon filth. On every story there was the same destitution, dirt, and promiscuity. Many windows were paneless, and in swept the wind howling, and the rain pouring torrentially. Many of the inmates slept on the bare tiled floors, never unclothing themselves. There was neither furniture nor

linen, the life led there was essentially an animal life, a commingling of either sex and of every age — humanity lapsing into animality through lack of even indispensable things, through indigence of so complete a character that men, women, and children fought even with tooth and nail for the very crumbs swept from the tables of the rich. And the worst of it all was the degradation of the human being; this was no case of the free naked savage, hunting and devouring his prey in the primeval forests; here civilised man was found, sunk into brutishness, with all the stigmas of his fall, debased, disfigured, and enfeebled, amidst the luxury and refinement of that city of Paris which is one of the queens of the world.

In every household Pierre heard the same story. There had been youth and gaiety at the outset, brave acceptance of the law that one must work. Then weariness had come; what was the use of always toiling if one were never to get rich? And so, by way of snatching a share of happiness, the husband turned to drink; the wife neglected her home, also drinking at times, and letting the children grow up as they might. Sordid surroundings, ignorance, and overcrowding did the rest. In the great majority of cases, prolonged lack of work was mostly to blame; for this not only empties the drawers of the savings hidden away in them, but exhausts human courage, and tends to confirmed habits of idleness. During long weeks the workshops empty, and the arms of the toilers lose strength. In all Paris, so feverishly inclined to action, it is impossible to find the slightest thing to do. And then the husband comes home in the even-

ing with tearful eyes, having vainly offered his arms everywhere, having failed even to get a job at street-sweeping, for that employment is much sought after, and to secure it one needs influence and protectors. Is it not monstrous to see a man seeking work that he may eat, and finding no work and therefore no food in this great city resplendent and resonant with wealth? The wife does not eat, the children do not eat. And then comes black famine, brutishness, and finally revolt and the snapping of all social ties under the frightful injustice meted out to poor beings who by their weakness are condemned to death. And the old workman, he whose limbs have been worn out by half a century of hard toil, without possibility of saving a copper, on what pallet of agony, in what dark hole must he not sink to die? Should he then be finished off with a mallet, like a crippled beast of burden, on the day when ceasing to work he also ceases to eat? Almost all pass away in the hospitals, others disappear, unknown, swept off by the muddy flow of the streets. One morning, on some rotten straw in a loathsome hovel, Pierre found a poor devil who had died of hunger and had been forgotten there for a week. The rats had devoured his face.

But it was particularly on an evening of the last winter that Pierre's heart had overflowed with pity. Awful in winter time are the sufferings of the poor in their fireless hovels, where the snow penetrates by every chink. The Seine rolls blocks of ice, the soil is frost-bound, in all sorts of callings there is an enforced cessation of work. Bands of urchins, barefooted, scarcely clad, hungry and racked by coughing,

wander about the ragpickers' "rents" and are carried off by sudden hurricanes of consumption. Pierre found families, women with five and six children, who had not eaten for three days, and who huddled together in heaps to try to keep themselves warm. And on that terrible evening, before anybody else, he went down a dark passage and entered a room of terror, where he found that a mother had just committed suicide with her five little ones — driven to it by despair and hunger — a tragedy of misery which for a few hours would make all Paris shudder! There was not an article of furniture or linen left in the place; it had been necessary to sell everything bit by bit to a neighbouring dealer. There was nothing but the stove where the charcoal was still smoking and a half-emptied palliasse on which the mother had fallen, suckling her last-born, a babe but three months old. And a drop of blood had trickled from the nipple of her breast, towards which the dead infant still protruded its eager lips. Two little girls, three and five years old, two pretty little blondes, were also lying there, sleeping the eternal sleep side by side; whilst of the two boys, who were older, one had succumbed crouching against the wall with his head between his hands, and the other had passed through the last throes on the floor, struggling as though he had sought to crawl on his knees to the window in order to open it. Some neighbours, hurrying in, told Pierre the fearful commonplace story; slow ruin, the father unable to find work, perchance taking to drink, the landlord weary of waiting, threatening the family with expulsion, and the mother losing her head, thirst-

ing for death, and prevailing on her little ones to die with her, while her husband, who had been out since the morning, was vainly scouring the streets. Just as the Commissary of Police arrived to verify what had happened, the poor devil returned, and when he had seen and understood things, he fell to the ground like a stunned ox, and raised a prolonged, plaintive howl, such a poignant cry of death that the whole terrified street wept at it.

Both in his ears and in his heart Pierre carried away with him that horrible cry, the plaint of a condemned race expiring amidst abandonment and hunger; and that night he could neither eat nor sleep. Was it possible that such abomination, such absolute destitution, such black misery leading straight to death should exist in the heart of that great city of Paris, brimful of wealth, intoxicated with enjoyment, flinging millions out of the windows for mere pleasure? What! there should on one side be such colossal fortunes, so many foolish fancies gratified, with lives endowed with every happiness, whilst on the other was found inveterate poverty, lack even of bread, absence of every hope, and mothers killing themselves with their babes, to whom they had nought to offer but the blood of their milkless breast! And a feeling of revolt stirred Pierre; he was for a moment conscious of the derisive futility of charity. What indeed was the use of doing that which he did — picking up the little ones, succouring the parents, prolonging the sufferings of the aged? The very foundations of the social edifice were rotten; all would soon collapse amid mire and blood. A great act of justice

alone could sweep the old world away in order that the new world might be built. And at that moment he realised so keenly how irreparable was the breach, how irremediable the evil, how deathly the cancer of misery, that he understood the actions of the violent, and was himself ready to accept the devastating and purifying whirlwind, the regeneration of the world by flame and steel, even as when in the dim ages Jehovah in His wrath sent fire from heaven to cleanse the accursed cities of the plains.

However, on hearing him sob that evening, Abbé Rose came up to remonstrate in fatherly fashion. The old priest was a saint, endowed with infinite gentleness and infinite hope. Why despair indeed when one had the Gospel? Did not the divine commandment, "Love one another," suffice for the salvation of the world? He, Abbé Rose, held violence in horror and was wont to say that, however great the evil, it would soon be overcome if humanity would but turn backward to the age of humility, simplicity, and purity, when Christians lived together in innocent brotherhood. What a delightful picture he drew of evangelical society, of whose second coming he spoke with quiet gaiety as though it were to take place on the very morrow! And Pierre, anxious to escape from his frightful recollections, ended by smiling, by taking pleasure in Abbé Rose's bright consoling tale. They chatted until a late hour, and on the following days reverted to the same subject of conversation, one which the old priest was very fond of, ever supplying new particulars, and speaking of the approaching reign of love and justice with the touching confidence

of a good if simple man, who is convinced that he will not die till he shall have seen the Deity descend upon earth.

And now a fresh evolution took place in Pierre's mind. The practice of benevolence in that poor district had developed infinite compassion in his breast, his heart failed him, distracted, rent by contemplation of the misery which he despaired of healing. And in this awakening of his feelings he often thought that his reason was giving way, he seemed to be retracing his steps towards childhood, to that need of universal love which his mother had implanted in him, and dreamt of chimerical solutions, awaiting help from the unknown powers. Then his fears, his hatred of the brutality of facts at last brought him an increasing desire to work salvation by love. No time should be lost in seeking to avert the frightful catastrophe which seemed inevitable, the fratricidal war of classes which would sweep the old world away beneath the accumulation of its crimes. Convinced that injustice had attained its apogee, that but little time remained before the vengeful hour when the poor would compel the rich to part with their possessions, he took pleasure in dreaming of a peaceful solution, a kiss of peace exchanged by all men, a return to the pure morals of the Gospel as it had been preached by Jesus.

Doubts tortured him at the outset. Could olden Catholicism be rejuvenated, brought back to the youth and candour of primitive Christianity? He set himself to study things, reading and questioning, and taking a more and more passionate interest in that great problem of Catholic socialism which had made

no little noise for some years past. And quivering with pity for the wretched, ready as he was for the miracle of fraternisation, he gradually lost such scruples as intelligence might have prompted, and persuaded himself that once again Christ would work the redemption of suffering humanity. At last a precise idea took possession of him, a conviction that Catholicism purified, brought back to its original state, would prove the one pact, the supreme law that might save society by averting the sanguinary crisis which threatened it.

When he had quitted Lourdes two years previously, revolted by all its gross idolatry, his faith for ever dead, but his mind worried by the everlasting need of the divine which tortures human creatures, a cry had arisen within him from the deepest recesses of his being: "A new religion! a new religion!" And it was this new religion, or rather this revived religion which he now fancied he had discovered in his desire to work social salvation — ensuring human happiness by means of the only moral authority that was erect, the distant outcome of the most admirable implement ever devised for the government of nations.

During the period of slow development through which Pierre passed, two men, apart from Abbé Rose, exercised great influence on him. A benevolent action brought him into intercourse with Monseigneur Bergerot, a bishop whom the Pope had recently created a cardinal, in reward for a whole life of charity, and this in spite of the covert opposition of the papal *curia* which suspected the French prelate to be a man of open mind, governing his

diocese in paternal fashion. Pierre became more impassioned by his intercourse with this apostle, this shepherd of souls, in whom he detected one of the good simple leaders that he desired for the future community. However, his apostolate was influenced even more decisively by meeting Viscount Philibert de la Choue at the gatherings of certain workingmen's Catholic associations. A handsome man, with military manners, and a long noble-looking face, spoilt by a small and broken nose which seemed to presage the ultimate defeat of a badly balanced mind, the Viscount was one of the most active agitators of Catholic socialism in France. He was the possessor of vast estates, a vast fortune, though it was said that some unsuccessful agricultural enterprises had already reduced his wealth by nearly one-half. In the department where his property was situated he had been at great pains to establish model farms, at which he had put his ideas on Christian socialism into practice, but success did not seem to follow him. However, it had all helped to secure his election as a deputy, and he spoke in the Chamber, unfolding the programme of his party in long and stirring speeches.

Unwearying in his ardour, he also led pilgrimages to Rome, presided over meetings, and delivered lectures, devoting himself particularly to the people, the conquest of whom, so he privately remarked, could alone ensure the triumph of the Church. And thus he exercised considerable influence over Pierre, who in him admired qualities which himself did not possess—an organising spirit and a militant if some-

what blundering will, entirely applied to the revival of Christian society in France. However, though the young priest learnt a good deal by associating with him, he nevertheless remained a sentimental dreamer, whose imagination, disdainful of political requirements, straightway winged its flight to the future abode of universal happiness; whereas the Viscount aspired to complete the downfall of the liberal ideas of 1789 by utilising the disillusion and anger of the democracy to work a return towards the past.

Pierre spent some delightful months. Never before had neophyte lived so entirely for the happiness of others. He was all love, consumed by the passion of his apostolate. The sight of the poor wretches whom he visited, the men without work, the women, the children without bread, filled him with a keener and keener conviction that a new religion must arise to put an end to all the injustice which otherwise would bring the rebellious world to a violent death. And he was resolved to employ all his strength in effecting and hastening the intervention of the divine, the resuscitation of primitive Christianity. His Catholic faith remained dead; he still had no belief in dogmas, mysteries, and miracles; but a hope sufficed him, the hope that the Church might still work good, by connecting itself with the irresistible modern democratic movement, so as to save the nations from the social catastrophe which impended. His soul had grown calm since he had taken on himself the mission of replanting the Gospel in the hearts of the hungry and growling people of the Faubourgs. He was now leading an active life,

and suffered less from the frightful void which he had brought back from Lourdes; and as he no longer questioned himself, the anguish of uncertainty no longer tortured him. It was with the serenity which attends the simple accomplishment of duty that he continued to say his mass. He even finished by thinking that the mystery which he thus celebrated—indeed, that all the mysteries and all the dogmas were but symbols—rites requisite for humanity in its childhood, which would be got rid of later on, when enlarged, purified, and instructed humanity should be able to support the brightness of naked truth.

And in his zealous desire to be useful, his passion to proclaim his belief aloud, Pierre one morning found himself at his table writing a book. This had come about quite naturally; the book proceeded from him like a heart-cry, without any literary idea having crossed his mind. One night, whilst he lay awake, its title suddenly flashed before his eyes in the darkness: "NEW ROME." That expressed everything, for must not the new redemption of the nations originate in eternal and holy Rome? The only existing authority was found there; rejuvenescence could only spring from the sacred soil where the old Catholic oak had grown. He wrote his book in a couple of months, having unconsciously prepared himself for the work by his studies in contemporary socialism during a year past. There was a bubbling flow in his brain as in a poet's; it seemed to him sometimes as if he dreamt those pages, as if an internal distant voice dictated them to him.

When he read passages written on the previous day to Viscount Philibert de la Choue, the latter often expressed keen approval of them from a practical point of view, saying that one must touch the people in order to lead them, and that it would also be a good plan to compose pious and yet amusing songs for singing in the workshops. As for Monseigneur Bergerot, without examining the book from the dogmatic standpoint, he was deeply touched by the glowing breath of charity which every page exhaled, and was even guilty of the imprudence of writing an approving letter to the author, which letter he authorised him to insert in his work by way of preface. And yet now the Congregation of the Index Expurgatorius was about to place this book, issued in the previous June, under interdict; and it was to defend it that the young priest had hastened to Rome, inflamed by the desire to make his ideas prevail, and resolved to plead his cause in person before the Holy Father, having, he was convinced of it, simply given expression to the pontiff's views.

Pierre had not stirred whilst thus living his three last years afresh: he still stood erect before the parapet, before Rome, which he had so often dreamt of and had so keenly desired to see. There was a constant succession of arriving and departing vehicles behind him; the slim Englishmen and the heavy Germans passed away after bestowing on the classic view the five minutes prescribed by their guide-books; whilst the driver and the horse of Pierre's cab remained waiting complacently, each with his head drooping under the bright sun, which was heat-

ing the valise on the seat of the vehicle. And Pierre, in his black cassock, seemed to have grown slimmer and elongated, very slight of build, as he stood there motionless, absorbed in the sublime spectacle. He had lost flesh after his journey to Lourdes, his features too had become less pronounced. Since his mother's part in his nature had regained ascendancy, the broad, straight forehead, the intellectual air which he owed to his father seemed to have grown less conspicuous, while his kind and somewhat large mouth, and his delicate chin, bespeaking infinite affection, dominated, revealing his soul, which also glowed in the kindly sparkle of his eyes.

Ah! how tender and glowing were the eyes with which he gazed upon the Rome of his book, the new Rome that he had dreamt of! If, first of all, the *ensemble* had claimed his attention in the soft and somewhat veiled light of that lovely morning, at present he could distinguish details, and let his glance rest upon particular edifices. And it was with childish delight that he identified them, having long studied them in maps and collections of photographs. Beneath his feet, at the bottom of the Janiculum, stretched the Trastevere district with its chaos of old ruddy houses, whose sunburnt tiles hid the course of the Tiber. He was somewhat surprised by the flattish aspect of everything as seen from the terraced summit. It was as though a bird's-eye view levelled the city, the famous hills merely showing like bosses, swellings scarcely perceptible amidst the spreading sea of house-fronts. Yonder, on the right, distinct against the distant blue of the Alban

mountains, was certainly the Aventine with its three churches half-hidden by foliage; there, too, was the discrowned Palatine, edged as with black fringe by a line of cypresses. In the rear, the Cœlian hill faded away, showing only the trees of the Villa Mattei paling in the golden sunshine. The slender spire and two little domes of Sta. Maria Maggiore alone indicated the summit of the Esquiline, right in front and far away at the other end of the city; whilst on the heights of the neighbouring Viminal, Pierre only perceived a confused mass of whitish blocks, steeped in light and streaked with fine brown lines — recent erections, no doubt, which at that distance suggested an abandoned stone quarry. He long sought the Capitol without being able to discover it; he had to take his bearings, and ended by convincing himself that the square tower, modestly lost among surrounding house-roofs, which he saw in front of Sta. Maria Maggiore was its campanile. Next, on the left, came the Quirinal, recognisable by the long façade of the royal palace, a barrack or hospital-like façade, flat, crudely yellow in hue, and pierced by an infinite number of regularly disposed windows. However, as Pierre was completing the circuit, a sudden vision made him stop short. Without the city, above the trees of the Botanical Garden, the dome of St. Peter's appeared to him. It seemed to be poised upon the greenery, and rose up into the pure blue sky, sky-blue itself and so ethereal that it mingled with the azure of the infinite. The stone lantern which surmounts it, white and dazzling, looked as though it were suspended on high.

Pierre did not weary, and his glances incessantly travelled from one end of the horizon to the other. They lingered on the noble outlines, the proud gracefulness of the town-sprinkled Sabine and Alban mountains, whose girdle limited the expanse. The Roman Campagna spread out in far stretches, bare and majestic, like a desert of death, with the glaucous green of a stagnant sea; and he ended by distinguishing "the stern round tower" of the tomb of Cæcilia Metella, behind which a thin pale line indicated the ancient Appian Way. Remnants of aqueducts strewed the short herbage amidst the dust of the fallen worlds. And, bringing his glance nearer in, the city again appeared with its jumble of edifices, on which his eyes lighted at random. Close at hand, by its loggia turned towards the river, he recognised the huge tawny cube of the Palazzo Farnese. The low cupola, farther away and scarcely visible, was probably that of the Pantheon. Then by sudden leaps came the freshly whitened walls of San Paolo-fuori-le-Mura,¹ similar to those of some huge barn, and the statues crowning San Giovanni in Laterano, delicate, scarcely as big as insects. Next the swarming of domes, that of the Gesù, that of San Carlo, that of St'. Andrea della Valle, that of San Giovanni dei Fiorentini; then a number of other sites and edifices, all quivering with memories, the castle of St'. Angelo with its glittering statue of the Destroying Angel, the Villa Medici dominating the entire city, the terrace of the Pincio with its marbles showing whitely among its scanty verdure; and the thick-foliaged trees of the Villa

¹ St. Paul-beyond-the-walls.

Borghese, whose green crests bounded the horizon. Vainly however did Pierre seek the Colosseum.

The north wind, which was blowing very mildly, had now begun to dissipate the morning haze. Whole districts vigorously disentangled themselves, and showed against the vaporous distance like promontories in a sunlit sea. Here and there, in the indistinct swarming of houses, a strip of white wall glittered, a row of window panes flared, or a garden supplied a black splotch, of wondrous intensity of hue. And all the rest, the medley of streets and squares, the endless blocks of buildings, scattered about on either hand, mingled and grew indistinct in the living glory of the sun, whilst long coils of white smoke, which had ascended from the roofs, slowly traversed the pure sky.

Guided by a secret influence, however, Pierre soon ceased to take interest in all but three points of the mighty panorama. That line of slender cypresses which set a black fringe on the height of the Palatine yonder filled him with emotion: beyond it he saw only a void: the palaces of the Cæsars had disappeared, had fallen, had been razed by time; and he evoked their memory, he fancied he could see them rise like vague, trembling phantoms of gold amidst the purple of that splendid morning. Then his glances reverted to St. Peter's, and there the dome yet soared aloft, screening the Vatican which he knew was beside the colossus, clinging to its flanks. And that dome, of the same colour as the heavens, appeared so triumphant, so full of strength, so vast, that it seemed to him like a giant king, dominating

the whole city and seen from every spot throughout eternity. Then he fixed his eyes on the height in front of him, on the Quirinal, and there the King's palace no longer appeared aught but a flat low barracks bedaubed with yellow paint.

And for him all the secular history of Rome, with its constant convulsions and successive resurrections, found embodiment in that symbolical triangle, in those three summits gazing at one another across the Tiber. Ancient Rome blossoming forth in a piling up of palaces and temples, the monstrous florescence of imperial power and splendour; Papal Rome, victorious in the middle ages, mistress of the world, bringing that colossal church, symbolical of beauty regained, to weigh upon all Christendom; and the Rome of to-day, which he knew nothing of, which he had neglected, and whose royal palace, so bare and so cold, brought him disparaging ideas — the idea of some out-of-place, bureaucratic effort, some sacrilegious attempt at modernity in an exceptional city which should have been left entirely to the dreams of the future. However, he shook off the almost painful feelings which the importunate present brought to him, and would not let his eyes rest on a pale new district, quite a little town, in course of erection, no doubt, which he could distinctly see near St. Peter's on the margin of the river. He had dreamt of his own new Rome, and still dreamt of it, even in front of the Palatine whose edifices had crumbled in the dust of centuries, of the dome of St. Peter's whose huge shadow lulled the Vatican to sleep, of the Palace of the Quirinal repaired and repainted, reigning in homely fashion over

the new districts which swarmed on every side, while with its ruddy roofs the olden city, ripped up by improvements, coruscated beneath the bright morning sun.

Again did the title of his book, "NEW ROME," flare before Pierre's eyes, and another reverie carried him off; he lived his book afresh even as he had just lived his life. He had written it amid a flow of enthusiasm, utilising the *data* which he had accumulated at random; and its division into three parts, past, present, and future, had at once forced itself upon him.

The PAST was the extraordinary story of primitive Christianity, of the slow evolution which had turned this Christianity into present-day Catholicism. He showed that an economical question is invariably hidden beneath each religious evolution, and that, upon the whole, the everlasting evil, the everlasting struggle, has never been aught but one between the rich and the poor. Among the Jews, when their nomadic life was over, and they had conquered the land of Canaan, and ownership and property came into being, a class warfare at once broke out. There were rich, and there were poor; thence arose the social question. The transition had been sudden, and the new state of things so rapidly went from bad to worse that the poor suffered keenly, and protested with the greater violence as they still remembered the golden age of the nomadic life. Until the time of Jesus the prophets are but rebels who surge from out the misery of the people, proclaim its sufferings, and vent their wrath upon the rich, to whom they prophesy every evil in punishment for their injustice and their

harshness. Jesus Himself appears as the claimant of the rights of the poor. The prophets, whether socialists or anarchists, had preached social equality, and called for the destruction of the world if it were unjust. Jesus likewise brings to the wretched hatred of the rich. All His teaching threatens wealth and property; and if by the Kingdom of Heaven which He promised one were to understand peace and fraternity upon this earth, there would only be a question of returning to a life of pastoral simplicity, to the dream of the Christian community, such as after Him it would seem to have been realised by His disciples. During the first three centuries each Church was an experiment in communism, a real association whose members possessed all in common — wives excepted. This is shown to us by the apologists and early fathers of the Church. Christianity was then but the religion of the humble and the poor, a form of democracy, of socialism struggling against Roman society. And when the latter toppled over, rotted by money, it succumbed far more beneath the results of frantic speculation, swindling banks, and financial disasters, than beneath the onslaught of barbarian hordes and the stealthy, termite-like working of the Christians.

The money question will always be found at the bottom of everything. And a new proof of this was supplied when Christianity, at last triumphing by virtue of historical, social, and human causes, was proclaimed a State religion. To ensure itself complete victory it was forced to range itself on the side of the rich and the powerful; and one should see by means of what artfulness and sophistry the fathers of the

Church succeeded in discovering a defence of property and wealth in the Gospel of Jesus. All this, however, was a vital political necessity for Christianity; it was only at this price that it became Catholicism, the universal religion. From that time forth the powerful machine, the weapon of conquest and rule, was reared aloft: up above were the powerful and the wealthy, those whose duty it was to share with the poor, but who did not do so: while down below were the poor, the toilers, who were taught resignation and obedience, and promised the kingdom of futurity, the divine and eternal reward — an admirable monument which has lasted for ages, and which is entirely based on the promise of life beyond life, on the inextinguishable thirst for immortality and justice that consumes mankind.

Pierre had completed this first part of his book, this history of the past, by a broad sketch of Catholicism until the present time. First appeared St. Peter, ignorant and anxious, coming to Rome by an inspiration of genius, there to fulfil the ancient oracles which had predicted the eternity of the Capitol. Then came the first popes, mere heads of burial associations, the slow rise of the all-powerful papacy ever struggling to conquer the world, unremittingly seeking to realise its dream of universal domination. At the time of the great popes of the middle ages it thought for a moment that it had attained its goal, that it was the sovereign master of the nations. Would not absolute truth and right consist in the pope being both pontiff and ruler of the world, reigning over both the souls and the bodies of all men, even like the Deity whose

vicar he is? This, the highest and mightiest of all ambitions, one, too, that is perfectly logical, was attained by Augustus, emperor and pontiff, master of all the known world; and it is the glorious figure of Augustus, ever rising anew from among the ruins of ancient Rome, which has always haunted the popes; it is his blood which has pulsed in their veins.

But power had become divided into two parts amidst the crumbling of the Roman empire; it was necessary to content oneself with a share, and leave temporal government to the emperor, retaining over him, however, the right of coronation by divine grant. The people belonged to God, and in God's name the pope gave the people to the emperor, and could take it from him; an unlimited power whose most terrible weapon was excommunication, a superior sovereignty, which carried the papacy towards real and final possession of the empire. Looking at things broadly, the everlasting quarrel between the pope and the emperor was a quarrel for the people, the inert mass of humble and suffering ones, the great silent multitude whose irremediable wretchedness was only revealed by occasional covert growls. It was disposed of, for its good, as one might dispose of a child. Yet the Church really contributed to civilisation, rendered constant services to humanity, diffused abundant alms. In the convents, at any rate, the old dream of the Christian community was ever coming back: one-third of the wealth accumulated for the purposes of worship, the adornment and glorification of the shrine, one-third for the priests, and one-third for the poor. Was not this a simplification of life, a means of rendering existence possible to

the faithful who had no earthly desires, pending the marvellous contentment of heavenly life? Give us, then, the whole earth, and we will divide terrestrial wealth into three such parts, and you shall see what a golden age will reign amidst the resignation and the obedience of all!

However, Pierre went on to show how the papacy was assailed by the greatest dangers on emerging from its all-powerfulness of the middle ages. It was almost swept away amidst the luxury and excesses of the Renaissance, the bubbling of living sap which then gushed from eternal nature, downtrodden and regarded as dead for ages past. More threatening still were the stealthy awakenings of the people, of the great silent multitude whose tongue seemed to be loosening. The Reformation burst forth like the protest of reason and justice, like a recall to the disregarded truths of the Gospel; and to escape total annihilation Rome needed the stern defence of the Inquisition, the slow stubborn labour of the Council of Trent, which strengthened the dogmas and ensured the temporal power. And then the papacy entered into two centuries of peace and effacement, for the strong absolute monarchies which had divided Europe among themselves could do without it, and had ceased to tremble at the harmless thunderbolts of excommunication or to look on the pope as aught but a master of ceremonies, controlling certain rites. The possession of the people was no longer subject to the same rules. Allowing that the kings still held the people from God, it was the pope's duty to register the donation once for all, without ever intervening, whatever the

circumstances, in the government of states. Never was Rome farther away from the realisation of its ancient dream of universal dominion. And when the French Revolution burst forth, it may well have been imagined that the proclamation of the rights of man would kill that papacy to which the exercise of divine right over the nations had been committed. And so how great at first was the anxiety, the anger, the desperate resistance with which the Vatican opposed the idea of freedom, the new *credo* of liberated reason, of humanity regaining self-possession and control. It was the apparent *dénouement* of the long struggle between the pope and the emperor for possession of the people: the emperor vanished, and the people, henceforward free to dispose of itself, claimed to escape from the pope—an unforeseen solution, in which it seemed as though all the ancient scaffolding of the Catholic world must fall to the very ground.

At this point Pierre concluded the first part of his book by contrasting primitive Christianity with present-day Catholicism, which is the triumph of the rich and the powerful. That Roman society which Jesus had come to destroy in the name of the poor and humble, had not Catholic Rome steadily continued rebuilding it through all the centuries, by its policy of cupidity and pride? And what bitter irony it was to find, after eighteen hundred years of the Gospel, that the world was again collapsing through frantic speculation, rotten banks, financial disasters, and the frightful injustice of a few men gorged with wealth whilst thousands of their brothers were dying of hun-

ger! The whole redemption of the wretched had to be worked afresh. However, Pierre gave expression to all these terrible things in words so softened by charity, so steeped in hope, that they lost their revolutionary danger. Moreover, he nowhere attacked the dogmas. His book, in its sentimental, somewhat poetic form, was but the cry of an apostle glowing with love for his fellow-men.

Then came the second part of the work, the *PRES-ENT*, a study of Catholic society as it now exists. Here Pierre had painted a frightful picture of the misery of the poor, the misery of a great city, which he knew so well and bled for, through having laid his hands upon its poisonous wounds. The present-day injustice could no longer be tolerated, charity was becoming powerless, and so frightful was the suffering that all hope was dying away from the hearts of the people. And was it not the monstrous spectacle presented by Christendom, whose abominations corrupted the people, and maddened it with hatred and vengeance, that had largely destroyed its faith? However, after this picture of rotting and crumbling society, Pierre returned to history, to the period of the French Revolution, to the mighty hope with which the idea of freedom had filled the world. The middle classes, the great Liberal party, on attaining power had undertaken to bring happiness to one and all. But after a century's experience it really seemed that liberty had failed to bring any happiness whatever to the outcasts. In the political sphere illusions were departing. At all events, if the reigning third estate declares itself satisfied, the fourth estate, that of the

toilers,¹ still suffers and continues to demand its share of fortune. The working classes have been proclaimed free; political equality has been granted them, but the gift has been valueless, for economically they are still bound to servitude, and only enjoy, as they did formerly, the liberty of dying of hunger. All the socialist revendications have come from that; between labour and capital rests the terrifying problem, the solution of which threatens to sweep away society. When slavery disappeared from the olden world to be succeeded by salaried employment the revolution was immense, and certainly the Christian principle was one of the great factors in the destruction of slavery. Nowadays, therefore, when the question is to replace salaried employment by something else, possibly by the participation of the workman in the profits of his work, why should not Christianity again seek a new principle of action? The fatal and proximate accession of the democracy means the beginning of another phase in human history, the creation of the society of to-morrow. And Rome cannot keep away from the arena; the papacy must take part in the quarrel if it does not desire to disappear from the world like a piece of mechanism that has become altogether useless.

Hence it followed that Catholic socialism was legitimate. On every side the socialist sects were battling with their various solutions for the privilege of ensuring the happiness of the people, and the Church also must offer her solution of the problem. Here it was

¹ In England we call the press the fourth estate, but in France and elsewhere the term is applied to the working classes, and in that sense must be taken here. — *Trans.*

that New Rome appeared, that the evolution spread into a renewal of boundless hope. Most certainly there was nothing contrary to democracy in the principles of the Roman Catholic Church. Indeed she had only to return to the evangelical traditions, to become once more the Church of the humble and the poor, to re-establish the universal Christian community. She is undoubtedly of democratic essence, and if she sided with the rich and the powerful when Christianity became Catholicism, she only did so perforce, that she might live by sacrificing some portion of her original purity; so that if to-day she should abandon the condemned governing classes in order to make common cause with the multitude of the wretched, she would simply be drawing nearer to Christ, thereby securing a new lease of youth and purifying herself of all the political compromises which she formerly was compelled to accept. Without renouncing aught of her absolutism the Church has at all times known how to bow to circumstances; but she reserves her perfect sovereignty, simply tolerating that which she cannot prevent, and patiently waiting, even through long centuries, for the time when she shall again become the mistress of the world.

Might not that time come in the crisis which was now at hand? Once more, all the powers are battling for possession of the people. Since the people, thanks to liberty and education, has become strong, since it has developed consciousness and will, and claimed its share of fortune, all rulers have been seeking to attach it to themselves, to reign by it, and even with it, should that be necessary. Socialism, therein lies the future,

the new instrument of government; and the kings tottering on their thrones, the middle-class presidents of anxious republics, the ambitious plotters who dream of power, all dabble in socialism! They all agree that the capitalist organisation of the State is a return to pagan times, to the olden slave-market; and they all talk of breaking for ever the iron law by which the labour of human beings has become so much merchandise, subject to supply and demand, with wages calculated on an estimate of what is strictly necessary to keep a workman from dying of hunger. And, down in the sphere below, the evil increases, the workmen agonise with hunger and exasperation, while above them discussion still goes on, systems are bandied about, and well-meaning persons exhaust themselves in attempting to apply ridiculously inadequate remedies. There is much stir without any progress, all the wild bewilderment which precedes great catastrophes. And among the many, Catholic socialism, quite as ardent as Revolutionary socialism, enters the lists and strives to conquer.

After these explanations Pierre gave an account of the long efforts made by Catholic socialism throughout the Christian world. That which particularly struck one in this connection was that the warfare became keener and more victorious whenever it was waged in some land of propaganda, as yet not completely conquered by Roman Catholicism. For instance, in the countries where Protestantism confronted the latter, the priests fought with wondrous passion, as for dear life itself, contending with the schismatical clergy for possession of the people by dint of daring, by unfolding

the most audacious democratic theories. In Germany, the classic land of socialism, Mgr. Ketteler was one of the first to speak of adequately taxing the rich; and later he fomented a wide-spread agitation which the clergy now directs by means of numerous associations and newspapers. In Switzerland Mgr. Mermillod pleaded the cause of the poor so loudly that the bishops there now almost make common cause with the democratic socialists, whom they doubtless hope to convert when the day for sharing arrives. In England, where socialism penetrates so very slowly, Cardinal Manning achieved considerable success, stood by the working classes on the occasion of a famous strike, and helped on a popular movement, which was signalised by numerous conversions. But it was particularly in the United States of America that Catholic socialism proved triumphant, in a sphere of democracy where the bishops, like Mgr. Ireland, were forced to set themselves at the head of the working-class agitation. And there across the Atlantic a new Church seems to be germinating, still in confusion but overflowing with sap, and upheld by intense hope, as at the aurora of the rejuvenated Christianity of to-morrow.

Passing thence to Austria and Belgium, both Catholic countries, one found Catholic socialism mingling in the first instance with anti-semitism, while in the second it had no precise sense. And all movement ceased and disappeared when one came to Spain and Italy, those old lands of faith. The former with its intractable bishops who contented themselves with hurling excommunication at unbelievers as in the days of the Inquisition, seemed to be abandoned to the vio-

lent theories of revolutionaries, whilst Italy, immobilised in the traditional courses, remained without possibility of initiative, reduced to silence and respect by the presence of the Holy See. In France, however, the struggle remained keen, but it was more particularly a struggle of ideas. On the whole, the war was there being waged against the revolution, and to some it seemed as though it would suffice to re-establish the old organisation of monarchical times in order to revert to the golden age. It was thus that the question of working-class corporations had become the one problem, the panacea for all the ills of the toilers. But people were far from agreeing; some, those Catholics who rejected State interference and favoured purely moral action, desired that the corporations should be free; whilst others, the young and impatient ones, bent on action, demanded that they should be obligatory, each with capital of its own, and recognised and protected by the State.

Viscount Philibert de la Choue had by pen and speech carried on a vigorous campaign in favour of the obligatory corporations; and his great grief was that he had so far failed to prevail on the Pope to say whether in his opinion these corporations should be closed or open. According to the Viscount, herein lay the fate of society, a peaceful solution of the social question or the frightful catastrophe which must sweep everything away. In reality, though he refused to own it, the Viscount had ended by adopting State socialism. And, despite the lack of agreement, the agitation remained very great; attempts, scarcely happy in their results, were made; co-operative associations, companies for

erecting workmen's dwellings, popular savings' banks were started; many more or less disguised efforts to revert to the old Christian community organisation were tried; while day by day, amidst the prevailing confusion, in the mental perturbation and political difficulties through which the country passed, the militant Catholic party felt its hopes increasing, even to the blind conviction of soon resuming sway over the whole world.

The second part of Pierre's book concluded by a picture of the moral and intellectual uneasiness amidst which the end of the century is struggling. While the toiling multitude suffers from its hard lot and demands that in any fresh division of wealth it shall be ensured at least its daily bread, the *élite* is no better satisfied, but complains of the void induced by the freeing of its reason and the enlargement of its intelligence. It is the famous bankruptcy of rationalism, of positivism, of science itself which is in question. Minds consumed by need of the absolute grow weary of groping, weary of the delays of science which recognises only proven truths; doubt tortures them, they need a complete and immediate synthesis in order to sleep in peace; and they fall on their knees, overcome by the roadside, distracted by the thought that science will never tell them all, and preferring the Deity, the mystery revealed and affirmed by faith. Even to-day, it must be admitted, science calms neither our thirst for justice, our desire for safety, nor our everlasting idea of happiness after life in an eternity of enjoyment. To one and all it only brings the austere duty to live, to be a mere contributor in the universal toil; and how

well one can understand that hearts should revolt and sigh for the Christian heaven, peopled with lovely angels, full of light and music and perfumes! Ah! to embrace one's dead, to tell oneself that one will meet them again, that one will live with them once more in glorious immortality! And to possess the certainty of sovereign equity to enable one to support the abominations of terrestrial life! And in this wise to trample on the frightful thought of annihilation, to escape the horror of the disappearance of the *ego*, and to tranquillise oneself with that unshakable faith which postpones until the portal of death be crossed the solution of all the problems of destiny! This dream will be dreamt by the nations for ages yet. And this it is which explains why, in these last days of the century, excessive mental labour and the deep unrest of humanity, pregnant with a new world, have awakened religious feeling, anxious, tormented by thoughts of the ideal and the infinite, demanding a moral law and an assurance of superior justice. Religions may disappear, but religious feelings will always create new ones, even with the help of science. A new religion! a new religion! Was it not the ancient Catholicism, which in the soil of the present day, where all seemed conducive to a miracle, was about to spring up afresh, throw out green branches and blossom in a young yet mighty florescence?

At last, in the third part of his book and in the glowing language of an apostle, Pierre depicted the FUTURE: Catholicism rejuvenated, and bringing health and peace, the forgotten golden age of primitive Christianity, back to expiring society. He began with an

emotional and sparkling portrait of Leo XIII, the ideal Pope, the Man of Destiny entrusted with the salvation of the nations. He had conjured up a presentment of him and beheld him thus in his feverish longing for the advent of a pastor who should put an end to human misery. It was perhaps not a close likeness, but it was a portrait of the needed saviour, with open heart and mind, and inexhaustible benevolence, such as he had dreamed. At the same time he had certainly searched documents, studied encyclical letters, based his sketch upon facts: first Leo's religious education at Rome, then his brief nunciature at Brussels, and afterwards his long episcopate at Perugia. And as soon as Leo became pope in the difficult situation bequeathed by Pius IX, the duality of his nature appeared: on one hand was the firm guardian of dogmas, on the other the supple politician resolved to carry conciliation to its utmost limits. We see him flatly severing all connection with modern philosophy, stepping backward beyond the Renaissance to the middle ages and reviving Christian philosophy, as expounded by "the angelic doctor," St. Thomas Aquinas, in Catholic schools. Then the dogmas being in this wise sheltered, he adroitly maintains himself in equilibrium by giving securities to every power, striving to utilise every opportunity. He displays extraordinary activity, reconciles the Holy See with Germany, draws nearer to Russia, contents Switzerland, asks the friendship of Great Britain, and writes to the Emperor of China begging him to protect the missionaries and Christians in his dominions. Later on, too, he intervenes in France and acknowledges the legitimacy of the Republic.

From the very outset an idea becomes apparent in all his actions, an idea which will place him among the great papal politicians. It is moreover the ancient idea of the papacy — the conquest of every soul, Rome capital and mistress of the world. Thus Leo XIII has but one desire, one object, that of unifying the Church, of drawing all the dissident communities to it in order that it may be invincible in the coming social struggle. He seeks to obtain recognition of the moral authority of the Vatican in Russia; he dreams of disarming the Anglican Church and of drawing it into a sort of fraternal truce; and he particularly seeks to come to an understanding with the Schismatical Churches of the East, which he regards as sisters, simply living apart, whose return his paternal heart entreats. Would not Rome indeed dispose of victorious strength if she exercised uncontested sway over all the Christians of the earth?

And here the social ideas of Leo XIII come in. Whilst yet Bishop of Perugia he wrote a pastoral letter in which a vague humanitarian socialism appeared. As soon, however, as he had assumed the triple crown his opinions changed and he anathematised the revolutionaries whose audacity was terrifying Italy. But almost at once he corrected himself, warned by events and realising the great danger of leaving socialism in the hands of the enemies of the Church. Then he listened to the bishops of the lands of propaganda, ceased to intervene in the Irish quarrel, withdrew the excommunications which he had launched against the American "knights of labour," and would not allow the bold works of Catholic socialist writers to be placed

in the Index. This evolution towards democracy may be traced through his most famous encyclical letters: *Immortale Dei*, on the constitution of States; *Libertas*, on human liberty; *Sapientæ*, on the duties of Christian citizens; *Rerum novarum*, on the condition of the working classes; and it is particularly this last which would seem to have rejuvenated the Church. The Pope herein chronicles the undeserved misery of the toilers, the undue length of the hours of labour, the insufficiency of salaries. All men have the right to live, and all contracts extorted by threats of starvation are unjust. Elsewhere he declares that the workman must not be left defenceless in presence of a system which converts the misery of the majority into the wealth of a few. Compelled to deal vaguely with questions of organisation, he contents himself with encouraging the corporative movement, placing it under State patronage; and after thus contributing to restore the secular power, he reinstates the Deity on the throne of sovereignty, and discerns the path to salvation more particularly in moral measures, in the ancient respect due to family ties and ownership. Nevertheless, was not the helpful hand which the august Vicar of Christ thus publicly tendered to the poor and the humble, the certain token of a new alliance, the announcement of a new reign of Jesus upon earth? Thenceforward the people knew that it was not abandoned. And from that moment too how glorious became Leo XIII, whose sacerdotal jubilee and episcopal jubilee were celebrated by all Christendom amidst the coming of a vast multitude, of endless offerings, and of flattering letters from every sovereign!

Pierre next dealt with the question of the temporal power, and this he thought he might treat freely. Naturally, he was not ignorant of the fact that the Pope in his quarrel with Italy upheld the rights of the Church over Rome as stubbornly as his predecessor; but he imagined that this was merely a necessary conventional attitude, imposed by political considerations, and destined to be abandoned when the times were ripe. For his own part he was convinced that if the Pope had never appeared greater than he did now, it was to the loss of the temporal power that he owed it; for thence had come the great increase of his authority, the pure splendour of moral omnipotence which he diffused.

What a long history of blunders and conflicts had been that of the possession of the little kingdom of Rome during fifteen centuries! Constantine quits Rome in the fourth century, only a few forgotten functionaries remaining on the deserted Palatine, and the Pope naturally rises to power, and the life of the city passes to the Lateran. However, it is only four centuries later that Charlemagne recognises accomplished facts and formally bestows the States of the Church upon the papacy. From that time warfare between the spiritual power and the temporal powers has never ceased; though often latent it has at times become acute, breaking forth with blood and fire. And to-day, in the midst of Europe in arms, is it not unreasonable to dream of the papacy ruling a strip of territory where it would be exposed to every vexation, and where it could only maintain itself by the help of a foreign army? What would become of it

in the general massacre which is apprehended? Is it not far more sheltered, far more dignified, far more lofty when disentangled from all terrestrial cares, reigning over the world of souls?

In the early times of the Church the papacy from being merely local, merely Roman, gradually became catholicised, universalised, slowly acquiring dominion over all Christendom. In the same way the Sacred College, at first a continuation of the Roman Senate, acquired an international character, and in our time has ended by becoming the most cosmopolitan of assemblies, in which representatives of all the nations have seats. And is it not evident that the Pope, thus leaning on the cardinals, has become the one great international power which exercises the greater authority since it is free from all monarchical interests, and can speak not merely in the name of country but in that of humanity itself? The solution so often sought amidst such long wars surely lies in this: Either give the Pope the temporal sovereignty of the world, or leave him only the spiritual sovereignty. Vicar of the Deity, absolute and infallible sovereign by divine delegation, he can but remain in the sanctuary if, ruler already of the human soul, he is not recognised by every nation as the one master of the body also — the king of kings.

But what a strange affair was this new incursion of the papacy into the field sown by the French Revolution, an incursion conducting it perhaps towards the domination, which it has striven for with a will that has upheld it for centuries! For now it stands alone before the people. The kings are down. And as the

people is henceforth free to give itself to whomsoever it pleases, why should it not give itself to the Church? The depreciation which the idea of liberty has certainly undergone renders every hope permissible. The liberal party appears to be vanquished in the sphere of economics. The toilers, dissatisfied with 1789 complain of the aggravation of their misery, bestir themselves, seek happiness despairingly. On the other hand the new *régimes* have increased the international power of the Church; Catholic members are numerous in the parliaments of the republics and the constitutional monarchies. All circumstances seem therefore to favour this extraordinary return of fortune, Catholicism reverting to the vigour of youth in its old age. Even science, remember, is accused of bankruptcy, a charge which saves the *Syllabus* from ridicule, troubles the minds of men, and throws the limitless sphere of mystery and impossibility open once more. And then a prophecy is recalled, a prediction that the papacy shall be mistress of the world on the day when she marches at the head of the democracy after reuniting the Schismatical Churches of the East to the Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman Church. And, in Pierre's opinion, assuredly the times had come since Pope Leo XIII, dismissing the great and the wealthy of the world, left the kings driven from their thrones in exile to place himself like Jesus on the side of the foodless toilers and the beggars of the high roads. Yet a few more years, perhaps, of frightful misery, alarming confusion, fearful social danger, and the people, the great silent multitude which others have so far disposed of, will return to

the cradle, to the unified Church of Rome, in order to escape the destruction which threatens human society.

Pierre concluded his book with a passionate evocation of New Rome, the spiritual Rome which would soon reign over the nations, reconciled and fraternising as in another golden age. Herein he even saw the end of superstitions. Without making a direct attack on dogma, he allowed himself to dream of an enlargement of religious feeling, freed from rites, and absorbed in the one satisfaction of human charity. And still smarting from his journey to Lourdes, he felt the need of contenting his heart. Was not that gross superstition of Lourdes the hateful symptom of the excessive suffering of the times? On the day when the Gospel should be universally diffused and practised, suffering ones would cease seeking an illusory relief so far away, assured as they would be of finding assistance, consolation, and cure in their homes amidst their brothers. At Lourdes there was an iniquitous displacement of wealth, a spectacle so frightful as to make one doubt of God, a perpetual conflict which would disappear in the truly Christian society of to-morrow. Ah! that society, that Christian community, all Pierre's work ended in an ardent longing for its speedy advent: Christianity becoming once more the religion of truth and justice which it had been before it allowed itself to be conquered by the rich and the powerful! The little ones and the poor ones reigning, sharing the wealth of earth, and owing obedience to nought but the levelling law of work! The Pope alone erect at the head of the federation of nations, prince of peace, with the simple mission

of supplying the moral rule, the link of charity and love which was to unite all men! And would not this be the speedy realisation of the promises of Christ? The times were near accomplishment, secular and religious society would mingle so closely that they would form but one; and it would be the age of triumph and happiness predicted by all the prophets, no more struggles possible, no more antagonism between the mind and the body, but a marvellous equilibrium which would kill evil and set the kingdom of heaven upon earth. New Rome, the centre of the world, bestowing on the world the new religion!

Pierre felt that tears were coming to his eyes, and with an unconscious movement, never noticing how much he astonished the slim Englishmen and thick-set Germans passing along the terrace, he opened his arms and extended them towards the *real* Rome, steeped in such lovely sunshine and stretched out at his feet. Would she prove responsive to his dream? Would he, as he had written, find within her the remedy for our impatience and our alarms? Could Catholicism be renewed, could it return to the spirit of primitive Christianity, become the religion of the democracy, the faith which the modern world, overturned and in danger of perishing, awaits in order to be pacified and to live?

Pierre was full of generous passion, full of faith. He again beheld good Abbé Rose weeping with emotion as he read his book. He heard Viscount Philibert de la Choue telling him that such a book was worth an army. And he particularly felt strong in the approval of Cardinal Bergerot, that apostle of inexhaustible charity. Why should the Congregation

of the Index threaten his work with interdiction? Since he had been officiously advised to go to Rome if he desired to defend himself, he had been turning this question over in his mind without being able to discover which of his pages were attacked. To him indeed they all seemed to glow with the purest Christianity. However, he had arrived quivering with enthusiasm and courage: he was all eagerness to kneel before the Pope, and place himself under his august protection, assuring him that he had not written a line without taking inspiration from his ideas, without desiring the triumph of his policy. Was it possible that condemnation should be passed on a book in which he imagined in all sincerity that he had exalted Leo XIII by striving to help him in his work of Christian reunion and universal peace?

For a moment longer Pierre remained standing before the parapet. He had been there for nearly an hour, unable to drink in enough of the grandeur of Rome, which, given all the unknown things she hid from him, he would have liked to possess at once. Oh! to seize hold of her, know her, ascertain at once the true word which he had come to seek from her! This again, like Lourdes, was an experiment, but a graver one, a decisive one, whence he would emerge either strengthened or overcome for evermore. He no longer sought the simple, perfect faith of the little child, but the superior faith of the intellectual man, raising himself above rites and symbols, working for the greatest happiness of humanity as based on its need of certainty. His temples throbbed responsive to his heart. What would be the answer of Rome?

The sunlight had increased and the higher districts now stood out more vigorously against the fiery background. Far away the hills became gilded and em-purpled, whilst the nearer house-fronts grew very distinct and bright with their thousands of windows sharply outlined. However, some morning haze still hovered around; light veils seemed to rise from the lower streets, blurring the summits for a moment, and then evaporating in the ardent heavens where all was blue. For a moment Pierre fancied that the Palatine had vanished, for he could scarcely see the dark fringe of cypresses; it was as though the dust of its ruins concealed the hill. But the Quirinal was even more obscured; the royal palace seemed to have faded away in a fog, so paltry did it look with its low flat front, so vague in the distance that he no longer distinguished it; whereas above the trees on his left the dome of St. Peter's had grown yet larger in the limpid gold of the sunshine, and appeared to occupy the whole sky and dominate the whole city!

Ah! the Rome of that first meeting, the Rome of early morning, whose new districts he had not even noticed in the burning fever of his arrival — with what boundless hopes did she not inspirit him, this Rome which he believed he should find alive, such indeed as he had dreamed! And whilst he stood there in his thin black cassock, thus gazing on her that lovely day, what a shout of coming redemption seemed to arise from her house-roofs, what a promise of universal peace seemed to issue from that sacred soil, twice already Queen of the world! It was the third Rome, it was New Rome whose maternal love was travelling

across the frontiers to all the nations to console them and reunite them in a common embrace. In the passionate candour of his dream he beheld her, he heard her, rejuvenated, full of the gentleness of childhood, soaring, as it were, amidst the morning freshness into the vast pure heavens.

But at last Pierre tore himself away from the sublime spectacle. The driver and the horse, their heads drooping under the broad sunlight, had not stirred. On the seat the valise was almost burning, hot with rays of the sun which was already heavy. And once more Pierre got into the vehicle and gave this address:

“Via Giulia, Palazzo Boccanera.”

II

THE Via Giulia, which runs in a straight line over a distance of five hundred yards from the Farnese palace to the church of St. John of the Florentines, was at that hour steeped in bright sunlight, the glow streaming from end to end and whitening the small square paving stones. The street had no footways, and the cab rolled along it almost to the farther extremity, passing the old grey sleepy and deserted residences whose large windows were barred with iron, while their deep porches revealed sombre courts resembling wells. Laid out by Pope Julius II, who had dreamt of lining it with magnificent palaces, the street, then the most regular and handsome in Rome, had served as Corso¹ in the sixteenth century. One could tell that one was in a former luxurious district, which had lapsed into silence, solitude, and abandonment, instinct with a kind of religious gentleness and discretion. The old house-fronts followed one after another, their shutters closed and their gratings occasionally decked with climbing plants. At some doors cats were seated, and dim shops, appropriated to humble trades, were installed in certain dependencies. But little traffic was apparent. Pierre only

¹ The Corso was so called on account of the horse races held in it at carnival time.— *Trans.*

noticed some bare-headed women dragging children behind them, a hay cart drawn by a mule, a superb monk draped in drugget, and a bicyclist speeding along noiselessly, his machine sparkling in the sun.

At last the driver turned and pointed to a large square building at the corner of a lane running towards the Tiber.

“Palazzo Boccanera.”

Pierre raised his head and was pained by the severe aspect of the structure, so bare and massive and blackened by age. Like its neighbours the Farnese and Sacchetti palaces, it had been built by Antonio da Sangallo in the early part of the sixteenth century, and, as with the former of those residences, the tradition ran that in raising the pile the architect had made use of stones pilfered from the Colosseum and the Theatre of Marcellus. The vast, square-looking façade had three upper stories, each with seven windows, and the first one very lofty and noble. Down below, the only sign of decoration was that the high ground-floor windows, barred with huge projecting gratings as though from fear of siege, rested upon large consoles, and were crowned by attics which smaller consoles supported. Above the monumental entrance, with folding doors of bronze, there was a balcony in front of the central first-floor window. And at the summit of the façade against the sky appeared a sumptuous entablature, whose frieze displayed admirable grace and purity of ornamentation. The frieze, the consoles, the attics, and the door-case were of white marble, but marble whose surface had so crumbled and so darkened that it now had the

rough yellowish grain of stone. Right and left of the entrance were two antique seats upheld by griffons also of marble; and incrustated in the wall at one corner, a lovely Renaissance fountain, its source dried up, still lingered; and on it a cupid riding a dolphin could with difficulty be distinguished, to such a degree had the wear and tear of time eaten into the sculpture.

Pierre's eyes, however, had been more particularly attracted by an escutcheon carved above one of the ground-floor windows, the escutcheon of the Boccaneras, a winged dragon venting flames, and underneath it he could plainly read the motto which had remained intact: "*Bocca nera, Alma rossa*" (black mouth, red soul). Above another window, as a pendant to the escutcheon, there was one of those little shrines which are still common in Rome, a satin-robed statuette of the Blessed Virgin, before which a lantern burnt in the full daylight.

The cabman was about to drive through the dim and gaping porch, according to custom, when the young priest, overcome by timidity, stopped him. "No, no," he said; "don't go in, it's useless."

Then he alighted from the vehicle, paid the man, and, valise in hand, found himself first under the vaulted roof, and then in the central court without having met a living soul.

It was a square and fairly spacious court, surrounded by a porticus like a cloister. Some remnants of statuary, marbles discovered in excavating, an armless Apollo, and the trunk of a Venus, were ranged against the walls under the dismal arcades; and some

fine grass had sprouted between the pebbles which paved the soil as with a black and white mosaic. It seemed as if the sun-rays could never reach that paving, mouldy with damp. A dimness and a silence instinct with departed grandeur and infinite mournfulness reigned there.

Surprised by the emptiness of this silent mansion, Pierre continued seeking somebody, a porter, a servant; and, fancying that he saw a shadow flit by, he decided to pass through another arch which led to a little garden fringing the Tiber. On this side the façade of the building was quite plain, displaying nothing beyond its three rows of symmetrically disposed windows. However, the abandonment reigning in the garden brought Pierre yet a keener pang. In the centre some large box-plants were growing in the basin of a fountain which had been filled up; while among the mass of weeds, some orange-trees with golden, ripening fruit alone indicated the tracery of the paths which they had once bordered. Between two huge laurel-bushes, against the right-hand wall, there was a sarcophagus of the second century — with fauns offering violence to nymphs, one of those wild *baccanali*, those scenes of eager passion which Rome in its decline was wont to depict on the tombs of its dead; and this marble sarcophagus, crumbling with age and green with moisture, served as a tank into which a streamlet of water fell from a large tragic mask incrusting in the wall. Facing the Tiber there had formerly been a sort of colonnaded loggia, a terrace whence a double flight of steps descended to the river. For the construction of the new quays,

however, the river bank was being raised, and the terrace was already lower than the new ground level, and stood there crumbling and useless amidst piles of rubbish and blocks of stone, all the wretched chalky confusion of the improvements which were ripping up and overturning the district.

Pierre, however, was suddenly convinced that he could see somebody crossing the court: So he returned thither and found a woman somewhat short of stature, who must have been nearly fifty, though as yet she had not a white hair, but looked very bright and active. At sight of the priest, however, an expression of distrust passed over her round face and clear eyes.

Employing the few words of broken Italian which he knew, Pierre at once sought to explain matters: "I am Abbé Pierre Froment, madame —" he began.

However, she did not let him continue, but exclaimed in fluent French, with the somewhat thick and lingering accent of the province of the Ile-de-France: "Ah! yes, Monsieur l'Abbé, I know, I know — I was expecting you, I received orders about you." And then, as he gazed at her in amazement, she added: "Oh! I'm a Frenchwoman! I've been here for five and twenty years, but I haven't yet been able to get used to their horrible lingo!"

Pierre thereupon remembered that Viscount Philibert de la Choue had spoken to him of this servant, one Victorine Bosquet, a native of Auneau in La Beauce, who, when two and twenty, had gone to Rome with a consumptive mistress. The latter's sudden death had left her in as much terror and

bewilderment as if she had been alone in some land of savages; and so she had gratefully devoted herself to the Countess Ernesta Brandini, a Boccanera by birth, who had, so to say, picked her up in the streets. The Countess had at first employed her as a nurse to her daughter Benedetta, hoping in this way to teach the child some French; and Victorine—remaining for some five and twenty years with the same family—had by degrees raised herself to the position of housekeeper, whilst still remaining virtually illiterate, so destitute indeed of any linguistic gift that she could only jabber a little broken Italian, just sufficient for her needs in her intercourse with the other servants.

“And is Monsieur le Vicomte quite well?” she resumed with frank familiarity. “He is so very pleasant, and we are always so pleased to see him. He stays here, you know, each time he comes to Rome. I know that the Princess and the Contessina received a letter from him yesterday announcing you.”

It was indeed Viscount Philibert de la Choue who had made all the arrangements for Pierre’s sojourn in Rome. Of the ancient and once vigorous race of the Boccaneras, there now only remained Cardinal Pio Boccanera, the Princess his sister, an old maid who from respect was called “Donna” Serafina, their niece Benedetta—whose mother Ernesta had followed her husband, Count Brandini, to the tomb—and finally their nephew, Prince Dario Boccanera, whose father, Prince Onofrio, was likewise dead, and whose mother, a Montefiori, had married again. It so chanced that the Viscount de la Choue was con-

nected with the family, his younger brother having married a Brandini, sister to Benedetta's father; and thus, with the courtesy rank of uncle, he had, in Count Brandini's time, frequently sojourned at the mansion in the Via Giulia. He had also become attached to Benedetta, especially since the advent of a private family drama, consequent upon an unhappy marriage which the young woman had contracted, and which she had petitioned the Holy Father to annul. Since Benedetta had left her husband to live with her aunt Serafina and her uncle the Cardinal, M. de la Choue had often written to her and sent her parcels of French books. Among others he had forwarded her a copy of Pierre's book, and the whole affair had originated in that wise. Several letters on the subject had been exchanged when at last Benedetta sent word that the work had been denounced to the Congregation of the Index, and that it was advisable the author should at once repair to Rome, where she graciously offered him the hospitality of the Boccanera mansion.

The Viscount was quite as much astonished as the young priest at these tidings, and failed to understand why the book should be threatened at all; however, he prevailed on Pierre to make the journey as a matter of good policy, becoming himself impassioned for the achievement of a victory which he counted in anticipation as his own. And so it was easy to understand the bewildered condition of Pierre, on tumbling into this unknown mansion, launched into an heroic adventure, the reasons and circumstances of which were beyond him.

Victorine, however, suddenly resumed: "But I am leaving you here, Monsieur l'Abbé. Let me conduct you to your rooms. Where is your luggage?"

Then, when he had shown her his valise which he had placed on the ground beside him, and explained that having no more than a fortnight's stay in view he had contented himself with bringing a second cassock and some linen, she seemed very much surprised.

"A fortnight! You only expect to remain here a fortnight? Well, well, you'll see."

And then summoning a big devil of a lackey who had ended by making his appearance, she said: "Take that up into the red room, Giacomo. Will you kindly follow me, Monsieur l'Abbé?"

Pierre felt quite comforted and inspirited by thus unexpectedly meeting such a lively, good-natured compatriot in this gloomy Roman "palace." Whilst crossing the court he listened to her as she related that the Princess had gone out, and that the Contessina—as Benedetta from motives of affection was still called in the house, despite her marriage—had not yet shown herself that morning, being rather poorly. However, added Victorine, she had her orders.

The staircase was in one corner of the court, under the porticus. It was a monumental staircase with broad, low steps, the incline being so gentle that a horse might easily have climbed it. The stone walls, however, were quite bare, the landings empty and solemn, and a death-like mournfulness fell from the lofty vault above.

As they reached the first floor, noticing Pierre's emotion, Victorine smiled. The mansion seemed to be uninhabited; not a sound came from its closed chambers. Simply pointing to a large oaken door on the right-hand, the housekeeper remarked: "The wing overlooking the court and the river is occupied by his Eminence. But he doesn't use a quarter of the rooms. All the reception-rooms on the side of the street have been shut. How could one keep up such a big place, and what, too, would be the use of it? We should need somebody to lodge."

With her lithe step she continued ascending the stairs. She had remained essentially a foreigner, a Frenchwoman, too different from those among whom she lived to be influenced by her environment. On reaching the second floor she resumed: "There, on the left, are Donna Serafina's rooms; those of the Contessina are on the right. This is the only part of the house where there's a little warmth and life. Besides, it's Monday to-day, the Princess will be receiving visitors this evening. You'll see."

Then, opening a door, beyond which was a second and very narrow staircase, she went on: "We others have our rooms on the third floor. I must ask Monsieur l'Abbé to let me go up before him."

The grand staircase ceased at the second floor, and Victorine explained that the third story was reached exclusively by this servants' staircase, which led from the lane running down to the Tiber on one side of the mansion. There was a small private entrance in this lane, which was very convenient.

At last, reaching the third story, she hurried along

a passage, again calling Pierre's attention to various doors. "These are the apartments of Don Vigilio, his Eminence's secretary. These are mine. And these will be yours. Monsieur le Vicomte will never have any other rooms when he comes to spend a few days in Rome. He says that he enjoys more liberty up here, as he can come in and go out as he pleases. I gave him a key to the door in the lane, and I'll give you one too. And, besides, you'll see what a nice view there is from here!"

Whilst speaking she had gone in. The apartments comprised two rooms: a somewhat spacious *salon*, with wall-paper of a large scroll pattern on a red ground, and a bed-chamber, where the paper was of a flax grey, studded with faded blue flowers. The sitting-room was in one corner of the mansion overlooking the lane and the Tiber, and Victorine at once went to the windows, one of which afforded a view over the distant lower part of the river, while the other faced the Trastevere and the Janiculum across the water.

'Ah! yes, it's very pleasant!" said Pierre, who had followed and stood beside her.

Giaccomo, who did not hurry, came in behind them with the valise. It was now past eleven o'clock; and seeing that the young priest looked tired, and realising that he must be hungry after such a journey, Victorine offered to have some breakfast served at once in the sitting-room. He would then have the afternoon to rest or go out, and would only meet the ladies in the evening at dinner. At the mere suggestion of resting, however, Pierre began to protest, declaring that

he should certainly go out, not wishing to lose an entire afternoon. The breakfast he readily accepted, for he was indeed dying of hunger.

However, he had to wait another full half hour. Giacomo, who served him under Victorine's orders, did everything in a most leisurely way. And Victorine, lacking confidence in the man, remained with the young priest to make sure that everything he might require was provided.

"Ah! Monsieur l'Abbé," said she, "what people! What a country! You can't have an idea of it. I should never get accustomed to it even if I were to live here for a hundred years. Ah! if it were not for the Contessina, but she's so good and beautiful."

Then, whilst placing a dish of figs on the table, she astonished Pierre by adding that a city where nearly everybody was a priest could not possibly be a good city. Thereupon the presence of this gay, active, unbelieving servant in the queer old palace again scared him.

"What! you are not religious?" he exclaimed.

"No, no, Monsieur l'Abbé. the priests don't suit me," said Victorine; "I knew one in France when I was very little, and since I've been here I've seen too many of them. It's all over. Oh! I don't say that on account of his Eminence, who is a holy man worthy of all possible respect. And besides, everybody in the house knows that I've nothing to reproach myself with. So why not leave me alone, since I'm fond of my employers and attend properly to my duties?"

She burst into a frank laugh. "Ah!" she resumed,

“when I was told that another priest was coming, just as if we hadn’t enough already, I couldn’t help growling to myself. But you look like a good young man, Monsieur l’Abbé, and I feel sure we shall get on well together. . . . I really don’t know why I’m telling you all this — probably it’s because you’ve come from yonder, and because the Contessina takes an interest in you. At all events, you’ll excuse me, won’t you, Monsieur l’Abbé? And take my advice, stay here and rest to-day; don’t be so foolish as to go running about their tiring city. There’s nothing very amusing to be seen in it, whatever they may say to the contrary.”

When Pierre found himself alone, he suddenly felt overwhelmed by all the fatigue of his journey coupled with the fever of enthusiasm that had consumed him during the morning. And as though dazed, intoxicated by the hasty meal which he had just made — a couple of eggs and a cutlet — he flung himself upon the bed with the idea of taking half an hour’s rest. He did not fall asleep immediately, but for a time thought of those Boccaneras, with whose history he was partly acquainted, and of whose life in that deserted and silent palace, instinct with such dilapidated and melancholy grandeur, he began to dream. But at last his ideas grew confused, and by degrees he sunk into sleep amidst a crowd of shadowy forms, some tragic and some sweet, with vague faces which gazed at him with enigmatical eyes as they whirled before him in the depths of dreamland.

The Boccaneras had supplied two popes to Rome, one in the thirteenth, the other in the fifteenth cen-

tury, and from those two favoured ones, those all-powerful masters, the family had formerly derived its vast fortune — large estates in the vicinity of Viterbo, several palaces in Rome, enough works of art to fill numerous spacious galleries, and a pile of gold sufficient to cram a cellar. The family passed as being the most pious of the Roman *patriziato*, a family of burning faith whose sword had always been at the service of the Church; but if it were the most believing family it was also the most violent, the most disputatious, constantly at war, and so fiercely savage that the anger of the Boccaneras had become proverbial. And thence came their arms, the winged dragon spitting flames, and the fierce, glowing motto, with its play on the name "*Bocca nera, Alma rossa*" (black mouth, red soul), the mouth darkened by a roar, the soul flaming like a brazier of faith and love.

Legends of endless passion, of terrible deeds of justice and vengeance still circulated. There was the duel fought by Onfredo, the Boccanera by whom the present palazzo had been built in the sixteenth century on the site of the demolished antique residence of the family. Onfredo, learning that his wife had allowed herself to be kissed on the lips by young Count Costamagna, had caused the Count to be kidnapped one evening and brought to the palazzo bound with cords. And there in one of the large halls, before freeing him, he compelled him to confess himself to a monk. Then he severed the cords with a stiletto, threw the lamps over and extinguished them, calling to the Count to keep the stiletto and defend himself. During more than an hour, in complete

obscurity, in this hall full of furniture, the two men sought one another, fled from one another, seized hold of one another, and pierced one another with their blades. And when the doors were broken down and the servants rushed in they found among the pools of blood, among the overturned tables and broken seats, Costamagna with his nose sliced off and his hips pierced with two and thirty wounds, whilst Onfredo had lost two fingers of his right hand, and had both shoulders riddled with holes! The wonder was that neither died of the encounter.

A century later, on that same bank of the Tiber, a daughter of the Boccaneras, a girl barely sixteen years of age, the lovely and passionate Cassia, filled all Rome with terror and admiration. She loved Flavio Corradini, the scion of a rival and hated house, whose alliance her father, Prince Boccanera, roughly rejected, and whom her elder brother, Ercole, swore to slay should he ever surprise him with her. Nevertheless the young man came to visit her in a boat, and she joined him by the little staircase descending to the river. But one evening Ercole, who was on the watch, sprang into the boat and planted his dagger full in Flavio's heart. Later on the subsequent incidents were unravelled; it was understood that Cassia, wrathful and frantic with despair, unwilling to survive her love and bent on wreaking justice, had thrown herself upon her brother, had seized both murderer and victim with the same grasp whilst overturning the boat; for when the three bodies were recovered Cassia still retained her hold upon the two men, pressing their faces one against the other

with her bare arms, which had remained as white as snow.

But those were vanished times. Nowadays, if faith remained, blood violence seemed to be departing from the Boccaneras. Their huge fortune also had been lost in the slow decline which for a century past has been ruining the Roman *patriziato*. It had been necessary to sell the estates; the palace had emptied, gradually sinking to the mediocrity and bourgeois life of the new times. For their part the Boccaneras obstinately declined to contract any alien alliances, proud as they were of the purity of their Roman blood. And poverty was as nothing to them; they found contentment in their immense pride, and without a plaint sequestered themselves amidst the silence and gloom in which their race was dwindling away.

Prince Ascanio, dead since 1848, had left four children by his wife, a Corvisieri; first Pio, the Cardinal; then Serafina, who, in order to remain with her brother, had not married; and finally Ernesta and Onofrio, both of whom were deceased. As Ernesta had merely left a daughter, Benedetta, behind her, it followed that the only male heir, the only possible continuator of the family name was Onofrio's son, young Prince Dario, now some thirty years of age. Should he die without posterity, the Boccaneras, once so full of life and whose deeds had filled Roman history in papal times, must fatally disappear.

Dario and his cousin Benedetta had been drawn together by a deep, smiling, natural passion ever since childhood. They seemed born one for the other; they could not imagine that they had been

brought into the world for any other purpose than that of becoming husband and wife as soon as they should be old enough to marry. When Prince Onofrio — an amiable man of forty, very popular in Rome, where he spent his modest fortune as his heart listed — espoused La Montefiori's daughter, the little Marchesa Flavia, whose superb beauty, suggestive of a youthful Juno, had maddened him, he went to reside at the Villa Montefiori, the only property, indeed the only belonging, that remained to the two ladies. It was in the direction of St'. Agnese-fuori-le-Mura,¹ and there were vast grounds, a perfect park in fact, planted with centenarian trees, among which the villa, a somewhat sorry building of the seventeenth century, was falling into ruins.

Unfavourable reports were circulated about the ladies, the mother having almost lost caste since she had become a widow, and the girl having too bold a beauty, too conquering an air. Thus the marriage had not met with the approval of Serafina, who was very rigid, or of Onofrio's elder brother Pio, at that time merely a *Cameriere segreto* of the Holy Father and a Canon of the Vatican basilica. Only Ernesta kept up a regular intercourse with Onofrio, fond of him as she was by reason of his gaiety of disposition; and thus, later on, her favourite diversion was to go each week to the Villa Montefiori with her daughter Benedetta, there to spend the day. And what a delightful day it always proved to Benedetta and Dario, she ten years old and he fifteen, what a fraternal loving day in that vast and almost abandoned

¹ St. Agnes-without-the-walls, N.E. of Rome.

garden with its parasol pines, its giant box-plants, and its clumps of evergreen oaks, amidst which one lost oneself as in a virgin forest.

The poor stifled soul of Ernesta was a soul of pain and passion. Born with a mighty longing for life, she thirsted for the sun—for a free, happy, active existence in the full daylight. She was noted for her large limpid eyes and the charming oval of her gentle face. Extremely ignorant, like all the daughters of the Roman nobility, having learnt the little she knew in a convent of French nuns, she had grown up cloistered in the black Boccanera palace, having no knowledge of the world than by those daily drives to the Corso and the Pincio on which she accompanied her mother. Eventually, when she was five and twenty, and was already weary and desolate, she contracted the customary marriage of her caste, espousing Count Brandini, the last-born of a very noble, very numerous and poor family, who had to come and live in the Via Giulia mansion, where an entire wing of the second floor was got ready for the young couple. And nothing changed, Ernesta continued to live in the same cold gloom, in the midst of the same dead past, the weight of which, like that of a tombstone, she felt pressing more and more heavily upon her.

The marriage was, on either side, a very honourable one. Count Brandini soon passed as being the most foolish and haughty man in Rome. A strict, intolerant formalist in religious matters, he became quite triumphant when, after innumerable intrigues, secret plottings which lasted ten long years, he at last secured the appointment of grand equerry to the

Holy Father. With this appointment it seemed as if all the dismal majesty of the Vatican entered his household. However, Ernesta found life still bearable in the time of Pius IX — that is until the latter part of 1870 — for she might still venture to open the windows overlooking the street, receive a few lady friends otherwise than in secrecy, and accept invitations to festivities. But when the Italians had conquered Rome and the Pope declared himself a prisoner, the mansion in the Via Giulia became a sepulchre. The great doors were closed and bolted, even nailed together in token of mourning; and during ten years the inmates only went out and came in by the little staircase communicating with the lane. It was also forbidden to open the window shutters of the façade. This was the sulking, the protest of the black world, the mansion sinking into death-like immobility, complete seclusion; no more receptions, barely a few shadows, the intimates of Donna Serafina who on Monday evenings slipped in by the little door in the lane which was scarcely set ajar. And during those ten lugubrious years, overcome by secret despair, the young woman wept every night, suffered untold agony at thus being buried alive.

Ernesta had given birth to her daughter Benedetta rather late in life, when three and thirty years of age. At first the little one helped to divert her mind. But afterwards her wonted existence, like a grinding millstone, again seized hold of her, and she had to place the child in the charge of the French nuns, by whom she herself had been educated, at the convent of the Sacred Heart of La Trinità de' Monti. When Bene-

detta left the convent, grown up, nineteen years of age, she was able to speak and write French, knew a little arithmetic and her catechism, and possessed a few hazy notions of history. Then the life of the two women was resumed, the life of a *gynæceum*, suggestive of the Orient; never an excursion with husband or father, but day after day spent in closed, secluded rooms, with nought to cheer one but the sole, everlasting, obligatory promenade, the daily drive to the Corso and the Pincio.

At home, absolute obedience was the rule; the tie of relationship possessed an authority, a strength, which made both women bow to the will of the Count, without possible thought of rebellion; and to the Count's will was added that of Donna Serafina and that of Cardinal Pio, both of whom were stern defenders of the old-time customs. Since the Pope had ceased to show himself in Rome, the post of grand equerry had left the Count considerable leisure, for the number of equipages in the pontifical stables had been very largely reduced; nevertheless, he was constant in his attendance at the Vatican, where his duties were now a mere matter of parade, and ever increased his devout zeal as a mark of protest against the usurping monarchy installed at the Quirinal. However, Benedetta had just attained her twentieth year, when one evening her father returned coughing and shivering from some ceremony at St. Peter's. A week later he died, carried off by inflammation of the lungs. And despite their mourning, the loss was secretly considered a deliverance by both women, who now felt that they were free.

Thenceforward Ernesta had but one thought, that of saving her daughter from that awful life of immurement and entombment. She herself had sorrowed too deeply: it was no longer possible for her to remount the current of existence; but she was unwilling that Benedetta should in her turn lead a life contrary to nature, in a voluntary grave. Moreover, similar lassitude and rebellion were showing themselves among other patrician families, which, after the sulking of the first years, were beginning to draw nearer to the Quirinal. Why indeed should the children, eager for action, liberty, and sunlight, perpetually keep up the quarrel of the fathers? And so, though no reconciliation could take place between the black world and the white world,¹ intermediate tints were already appearing, and some unexpected matrimonial alliances were contracted.

Ernesta for her part was indifferent to the political question; she knew next to nothing about it; but that which she passionately desired was that her race might at last emerge from that hateful sepulchre, that black, silent Boccanera mansion, where her woman's joys had been frozen by so long a death. She had suffered very grievously in her heart, as girl, as lover, and as wife, and yielded to anger at the thought that her life should have been so spoiled, so lost through idiotic resignation. Then, too, her mind was greatly influenced by the choice of a new confessor at this period; for she had remained very religious, practising all the rites of the Church, and ever docile to the

¹ The "blacks" are the supporters of the papacy, the "whites" those of the King of Italy. — *Trans.*

advice of her spiritual director. To free herself the more, however, she now quitted the Jesuit father whom her husband had chosen for her, and in his stead took Abbé Pisoni, the rector of the little church of Sta. Brigida, on the Piazza Farnese, close by. He was a man of fifty, very gentle, and very good-hearted, of a benevolence seldom found in the Roman world; and archæology, a passion for the old stones of the past, had made him an ardent patriot. Humble though his position was, folks whispered that he had on several occasions served as an intermediary in delicate matters between the Vatican and the Quirinal. And, becoming confessor not only of Ernesta but of Benedetta also, he was fond of discoursing to them about the grandeur of Italian unity, the triumphant sway that Italy would exercise when the Pope and the King should agree together.

Meantime Benedetta and Dario loved as on the first day, patiently, with the strong tranquil love of those who know that they belong to one another. But it happened that Ernesta threw herself between them and stubbornly opposed their marriage. No, no! her daughter must not espouse that Dario, that cousin, the last of the name, who in his turn would immure his wife in the black sepulchre of the Boccanera palace! Their union would be a prolongation of entombment, an aggravation of ruin, a repetition of the haughty wretchedness of the past, of the everlasting peevish sulking which depressed and benumbed one! She was well acquainted with the young man's character; she knew that he was egotistical and weak, incapable of thinking and acting, predestined to bury his race

with a smile on his lips, to let the last remnant of the house crumble about his head without attempting the slightest effort to found a new family. And that which she desired was fortune in another guise, a new birth for her daughter with wealth and the florescence of life amid the victors and powerful ones of to-morrow.

From that moment the mother did not cease her stubborn efforts to ensure her daughter's happiness despite herself. She told her of her tears, entreated her not to renew her own deplorable career. Yet she would have failed, such was the calm determination of the girl who had for ever given her heart, if certain circumstances had not brought her into connection with such a son-in-law as she dreamt of. At that very Villa Montefiori where Benedetta and Dario had plighted their troth, she met Count Prada, son of Orlando, one of the heroes of the reunion of Italy. Arriving in Rome from Milan, with his father, when eighteen years of age, at the time of the occupation of the city by the Italian Government, Prada had first entered the Ministry of Finances as a mere clerk, whilst the old warrior, his sire, created a senator, lived scantily on a petty income, the last remnant of a fortune spent in his country's service. The fine war-like madness of the former comrade of Garibaldi had, however, in the son turned into a fierce appetite for booty, so that the young man became one of the real conquerors of Rome, one of those birds of prey that dismembered and devoured the city. Engaged in vast speculations on land, already wealthy according to popular report, he had — at the time of meeting

Ernesta — just become intimate with Prince Onofrio, whose head he had turned by suggesting to him the idea of selling the far-spreading grounds of the Villa Montefiori for the erection of a new suburban district on the site. Others averred that he was the lover of the princess, the beautiful Flavia, who, although nine years his senior, was still superb. And, truth to tell, he was certainly a man of violent desires, with an eagerness to rush on the spoils of conquest which rendered him utterly unscrupulous with regard either to the wealth or to the wives of others.

From the first day that he beheld Benedetta he desired her. But she, at any rate, could only become his by marriage. And he did not for a moment hesitate, but broke off all connection with Flavia, eager as he was for the pure virgin beauty, the patrician youth of the other. When he realised that Ernesta, the mother, favoured him, he asked her daughter's hand, feeling certain of success. And the surprise was great, for he was some fifteen years older than the girl. However, he was a count, he bore a name which was already historical, he was piling up millions, he was regarded with favour at the Quirinal, and none could tell to what heights he might not attain. All Rome became impassioned.

Never afterwards was Benedetta able to explain to herself how it happened that she had eventually consented. Six months sooner, six months later, such a marriage would certainly have been impossible, given the fearful scandal which it raised in the black world. A Boccanera, the last maiden of that antique papal race, given to a Prada, to one of the despoilers of the

Church! Was it credible? In order that the wild project might prove successful it had been necessary that it should be formed at a particular brief moment — a moment when a supreme effort was being made to conciliate the Vatican and the Quirinal. A report circulated that an agreement was on the point of being arrived at, that the King consented to recognise the Pope's absolute sovereignty over the Leonine City,¹ and a narrow band of territory extending to the sea. And if such were the case would not the marriage of Benedetta and Prada become, so to say, a symbol of union, of national reconciliation? That lovely girl, the pure lily of the black world, was she not the acquiescent sacrifice, the pledge granted to the whites?

For a fortnight nothing else was talked of; people discussed the question, allowed their emotion rein, indulged in all sorts of hopes. The girl, for her part, did not enter into the political reasons, but simply listened to her heart, which she could not bestow since it was hers no more. From morn till night, however, she had to encounter her mother's prayers entreating her not to refuse the fortune, the life which offered. And she was particularly exercised by the counsels of her confessor, good Abbé Pisoni, whose patriotic zeal now burst forth. He weighed upon her with all his faith in the Christian destinies of Italy, and returned heartfelt thanks to Providence for having chosen one of his penitents as the instrument for hastening the recon-

¹ The Vatican suburb of Rome, called the *Civitas Leonina*, because Leo IV, to protect it from the Saracens and Arabs, enclosed it with walls in the ninth century. — *Trans.*

ciliation which would work God's triumph throughout the world. And her confessor's influence was certainly one of the decisive factors in shaping Benedetta's decision, for she was very pious, very devout, especially with regard to a certain Madonna whose image she went to adore every Sunday at the little church on the Piazza Farnese. One circumstance in particular struck her: Abbé Pisoni related that the flame of the lamp before the image in question whitened each time that he himself knelt there to beg the Virgin to incline his penitent to the all-redeeming marriage. And thus superior forces intervened; and she yielded in obedience to her mother, whom the Cardinal and Donna Serafina had at first opposed, but whom they left free to act when the religious question arose.

Benedetta had grown up in such absolute purity and ignorance, knowing nothing of herself, so shut off from existence, that marriage with another than Dario was to her simply the rupture of a long-kept promise of life in common. It was not the violent wrenching of heart and flesh that it would have been in the case of a woman who knew the facts of life. She wept a good deal, and then in a day of self-surrender she married Prada, lacking the strength to continue resisting everybody, and yielding to a union which all Rome had conspired to bring about.

But the clap of thunder came on the very night of the nuptials. Was it that Prada, the Piedmontese, the Italian of the North, the man of conquest, displayed towards his bride the same brutality that he had shown towards the city he had sacked? Or was

it that the revelation of married life filled Benedetta with repulsion since nothing in her own heart responded to the passion of this man? On that point she never clearly explained herself; but with violence she shut the door of her room, locked it and bolted it, and refused to admit her husband. For a month Prada was maddened by her scorn. He felt outraged; both his pride and his passion bled; and he swore to master her, even as one masters a colt, with the whip. But all his virile fury was impotent against the indomitable determination which had sprung up one evening behind Benedetta's small and lovely brow. The spirit of the Boccaneras had awoke within her; nothing in the world, not even the fear of death, would have induced her to become her husband's wife.¹ And then, love being at last revealed to her, there came a return of her heart to Dario, a conviction that she must reserve herself for him alone, since it was to him that she had promised herself.

Ever since that marriage, which he had borne like a bereavement, the young man had been travelling in France. She did not hide the truth from him, but wrote to him, again vowing that she would never be another's. And meantime her piety increased, her resolve to reserve herself for the lover she had chosen mingled in her mind with constancy of religious faith. The ardent heart of a great *amorosa* had ignited

¹ Many readers will doubtless remember that the situation as here described is somewhat akin to that of the earlier part of M. George Ohnet's *Ironmaster*, which, in its form as a novel, I translated into English many years ago. However, all resemblance between *Rome* and the *Ironmaster* is confined to this one point.—*Trans.*

within her, she was ready for martyrdom for faith's sake. And when her despairing mother with clasped hands entreated her to resign herself to her conjugal duties, she replied that she owed no duties, since she had known nothing when she married. Moreover, the times were changing; the attempts to reconcile the Quirinal and the Vatican had failed, so completely, indeed, that the newspapers of the rival parties had, with renewed violence, resumed their campaign of mutual insult and outrage; and thus that triumphal marriage, to which every one had contributed as to a pledge of peace, crumbled amid the general smash-up, became but a ruin the more added to so many others.

Ernesta died of it. She had made a mistake. Her spoilt life—the life of a joyless wife—had culminated in this supreme maternal error. And the worst was that she alone had to bear all the responsibility of the disaster, for both her brother, the Cardinal, and her sister, Donna Serafina, overwhelmed her with reproaches. For consolation she had but the despair of Abbé Pisoni, whose patriotic hopes had been destroyed, and who was consumed with grief at having contributed to such a catastrophe. And one morning Ernesta was found, icy white and cold, in her bed. Folks talked of the rupture of a blood-vessel, but grief had been sufficient, for she had suffered frightfully, secretly, without a plaint, as indeed she had suffered all her life long.

At this time Benedetta had been married about a twelvemonth: still strong in her resistance to her husband, but remaining under the conjugal roof in order to spare her mother the terrible blow of a public

scandal. However, her aunt Serafina had brought influence to bear on her, by opening to her the hope of a possible nullification of her marriage, should she throw herself at the feet of the Holy Father and entreat his intervention. And Serafina ended by persuading her of this, when, deferring to certain advice, she removed her from the spiritual control of Abbé Pisoni, and gave her the same confessor as herself. This was a Jesuit father named Lorenza, a man scarce five and thirty, with bright eyes, grave and amiable manners, and great persuasive powers. However, it was only on the morrow of her mother's death that Benedetta made up her mind, and returned to the Palazzo Boccanera, to occupy the apartments where she had been born, and where her mother had just passed away.

Immediately afterwards proceedings for annulling the marriage were instituted, in the first instance, for inquiry, before the Cardinal Vicar charged with the diocese of Rome. It was related that the Contessina had only taken this step after a secret audience with his Holiness, who had shown her the most encouraging sympathy. Count Prada at first spoke of applying to the law courts to compel his wife to return to the conjugal domicile; but, yielding to the entreaties of his old father Orlando, whom the affair greatly grieved, he eventually consented to accept the ecclesiastical jurisdiction. He was infuriated, however, to find that the nullification of the marriage was solicited on the ground of its non-consummation through *impotentia mariti*; this being one of the most valid and decisive pleas on which the Church of Rome consents

to part those whom she has joined. And far more unhappy marriages than might be imagined are severed on these grounds, though the world only gives attention to those cases in which people of title or renown are concerned, as it did, for instance, with the famous Martinez Campos suit.

In Benedetta's case, her counsel, Consistorial-Advocate Morano, one of the leading authorities of the Roman bar, simply neglected to mention, in his memoir, that if she was still merely a wife in name, this was entirely due to herself. In addition to the evidence of friends and servants, showing on what terms the husband and wife had lived since their marriage, the advocate produced a certificate of a medical character, showing that the non-consummation of the union was certain. And the Cardinal Vicar, acting as Bishop of Rome, had thereupon remitted the case to the Congregation of the Council. This was a first success for Benedetta, and matters remained in this position. She was waiting for the Congregation to deliver its final pronouncement, hoping that the ecclesiastical dissolution of the marriage would prove an irresistible argument in favour of the divorce which she meant to solicit of the civil courts. And meantime, in the icy rooms where her mother Ernesta, submissive and desolate, had lately died, the Contessina resumed her girlish life, showing herself calm, yet very firm in her passion, having vowed that she would belong to none but Dario, and that she would not belong to him until the day when a priest should have joined them together in God's holy name.

As it happened, some six months previously, Dario

also had taken up his abode at the Boccanera palace in consequence of the death of his father and the catastrophe which had ruined him. Prince Onofrio, after adopting Prada's advice and selling the Villa Montefiori to a financial company for ten million *lire*,¹ had, instead of prudently keeping his money in his pockets, succumbed to the fever of speculation which was consuming Rome. He began to gamble, buying back his own land, and ending by losing everything in the formidable *krach* which was swallowing up the wealth of the entire city. Totally ruined, somewhat deeply in debt even, the Prince nevertheless continued to promenade the Corso, like the handsome, smiling, popular man he was, when he accidentally met his death through falling from his horse; and four months later his widow, the ever beautiful Flavia — who had managed to save a modern villa and a personal income of forty thousand *lire*² from the disaster — was remarried to a man of magnificent presence, her junior by some ten years. This was a Swiss named Jules Laporte, originally a sergeant in the Papal Swiss Guard, then a traveller for a shady business in "relics," and finally Marchese Montefiore, having secured that title in securing his wife, thanks to a special brief of the Holy Father. Thus the Princess Boccanera had again become the Marchioness Montefiori.

It was then that Cardinal Boccanera, feeling greatly hurt, insisted on his nephew Dario coming to live with him, in a small apartment on the first floor of the palazzo. In the heart of that holy man, who seemed dead to the world, there still lingered pride of name

¹ 400,000*l.*

² 1,800*l.*

and lineage, with a feeling of affection for his young, slightly built nephew, the last of the race, the only one by whom the old stock might blossom anew. Moreover, he was not opposed to Dario's marriage with Benedetta, whom he also loved with a paternal affection; and so proud was he of the family honour, and so convinced of the young people's pious rectitude that, in taking them to live with him, he absolutely scorned the abominable rumours which Count Prada's friends in the white world had begun to circulate ever since the two cousins had resided under the same roof. Donna Serafina guarded Benedetta, as he, the Cardinal, guarded Dario, and in the silence and the gloom of the vast deserted mansion, ensanguined of olden time by so many tragic deeds of violence, there now only remained these four with their restrained, stilled passions, last survivors of a crumbling world upon the threshold of a new one.

When Abbé Pierre Froment all at once awoke from sleep, his head heavy with painful dreams, he was worried to find that the daylight was already waning. His watch, which he hastened to consult, pointed to six o'clock. Intending to rest for an hour at the utmost, he had slept on for nearly seven hours, overcome beyond power of resistance. And even on awaking he remained on the bed, helpless, as though he were conquered before he had fought. Why, he wondered, did he experience this prostration, this unreasonable discouragement, this quiver of doubt which had come he knew not whence during his sleep, and which was annihilating his youthful enthusiasm of the morning? Had the Boccaneras any connection

with this sudden weakening of his powers? He had espied dim disquieting figures in the black night of his dreams; and the anguish which they had brought him continued, and he again evoked them, scared as he was at thus awaking in a strange room, full of uneasiness in presence of the unknown. Things no longer seemed natural to him. He could not understand why Benedetta should have written to Viscount Philibert de la Choue to tell him that his, Pierre's, book had been denounced to the Congregation of the Index. What interest too could she have had in his coming to Rome to defend himself; and with what object had she carried her amiability so far as to desire that he should take up his quarters in the mansion? Pierre's stupefaction indeed arose from his being there, on that bed in that strange room, in that palace whose deep, death-like silence encompassed him. As he lay there, his limbs still overpowered and his brain seemingly empty, a flash of light suddenly came to him, and he realised that there must be certain circumstances that he knew nothing of—that, simple though things appeared, they must really hide some complicated intrigue. However, it was only a fugitive gleam of enlightenment; his suspicions faded; and he rose up shaking himself and accusing the gloomy twilight of being the sole cause of the shivering and the despondency of which he felt ashamed.

In order to bestir himself, Pierre began to examine the two rooms. They were furnished simply, almost meagrely, in mahogany, there being scarcely any two articles alike, though all dated from the beginning of the century. Neither the bed nor the windows nor

the doors had any hangings. On the floor of bare tiles, coloured red and polished, there were merely some little foot-mats in front of the various seats. And at sight of this middle-class bareness and coldness Pierre ended by remembering a room where he had slept in childhood — a room at Versailles, at the abode of his grandmother, who had kept a little grocer's shop there in the days of Louis Philippe. However, he became interested in an old painting which hung in the bed-room, on the wall facing the bed, amidst some childish and valueless engravings. But partially discernible in the waning light, this painting represented a woman seated on some projecting stone-work, on the threshold of a great stern building, whence she seemed to have been driven forth. The folding doors of bronze had for ever closed behind her, yet she remained there in a mere drapery of white linen; whilst scattered articles of clothing, thrown forth chance-wise with a violent hand, lay upon the massive granite steps. Her feet were bare, her arms were bare, and her hands, distorted by bitter agony, were pressed to her face — a face which one saw not, veiled as it was by the tawny gold of her rippling, streaming hair. What nameless grief, what fearful shame, what hateful abandonment was thus being hidden by that rejected one, that lingering victim of love, of whose unknown story one might for ever dream with tortured heart? It could be divined that she was adorably young and beautiful in her wretchedness, in the shred of linen draped about her shoulders; but a mystery enveloped everything else — her passion, possibly her misfortune, perhaps even her transgression — unless, indeed, she were

there merely as a symbol of all that shivers and that weeps visageless before the ever closed portals of the unknown. For a long time Pierre looked at her, and so intently that he at last imagined he could distinguish her profile, divine in its purity and expression of suffering. But this was only an illusion; the painting had greatly suffered, blackened by time and neglect; and he asked himself whose work it might be that it should move him so intensely. On the adjoining wall a picture of a Madonna, a bad copy of an eighteenth-century painting, irritated him by the banality of its smile.

Night was falling faster and faster, and, opening the sitting-room window, Pierre leant out. On the other bank of the Tiber facing him arose the Janiculum, the height whence he had gazed upon Rome that morning. But at this dim hour Rome was no longer the city of youth and dreamland soaring into the early sunshine. The night was raining down, grey and ashen; the horizon was becoming blurred, vague, and mournful. Yonder, to the left, beyond the sea of roofs, Pierre could still divine the presence of the Palatine; and yonder, to the right, there still arose the Dome of St. Peter's, now grey like slate against the leaden sky; whilst behind him the Quirinal, which he could not see, must also be fading away into the misty night. A few minutes went by, and everything became yet more blurred; he realised that Rome was fading, departing in its immensity of which he knew nothing. Then his causeless doubt and disquietude again came on him so painfully that he could no longer remain at the window. He closed it and sat down, letting the

darkness submerge him with its flood of infinite sadness. And his despairing reverie only ceased when the door gently opened and the glow of a lamp enlivened the room.

It was Victorine who came in quietly, bringing the light. "Ah! so you are up, Monsieur l'Abbé," said she; "I came in at about four o'clock but I let you sleep on. You have done quite right to take all the rest you required."

Then, as he complained of pains and shivering, she became anxious. "Don't go catching their nasty fevers," she said. "It isn't at all healthy near their river, you know. Don Vigilio, his Eminence's secretary, is always having the fever, and I assure you that it isn't pleasant."

She accordingly advised him to remain upstairs and lie down again. She would excuse his absence to the Princess and the Contessina. And he ended by letting her do as she desired, for he was in no state to have any will of his own. By her advice he dined, partaking of some soup, a wing of a chicken, and some preserves, which Giacomo, the big lackey, brought up to him. And the food did him a great deal of good; he felt so restored that he refused to go to bed, desiring, said he, to thank the ladies that very evening for their kindly hospitality. As Donna Serafina received on Mondays he would present himself before her.

"Very good," said Victorine approvingly. "As you are all right again it can do you no harm, it will even enliven you. The best thing will be for Don Vigilio to come for you at nine o'clock and accompany you. Wait for him here."

Pierre had just washed and put on the new cassock he had brought with him, when, at nine o'clock precisely, he heard a discreet knock at his door. A little priest came in, a man scarcely thirty years of age, but thin and debile of build, with a long, seared, saffron-coloured face. For two years past attacks of fever, coming on every day at the same hour, had been consuming him. Nevertheless, whenever he forgot to control the black eyes which lighted his yellow face, they shone out ardently with the glow of his fiery soul. He bowed, and then in fluent French introduced himself in this simple fashion: "Don Vigilio, Monsieur l'Abbé, who is entirely at your service. If you are willing, we will go down."

Pierre immediately followed him, expressing his thanks, and Don Vigilio, relapsing into silence, answered his remarks with a smile. Having descended the small staircase, they found themselves on the second floor, on the spacious landing of the grand staircase. And Pierre was surprised and saddened by the scanty illumination, which, as in some dingy lodging-house, was limited to a few gas-jets, placed far apart, their yellow splotches but faintly relieving the deep gloom of the lofty, endless corridors. All was gigantic and funereal. Even on the landing, where was the entrance to Donna Serafina's apartments, facing those occupied by her niece, nothing indicated that a reception was being held that evening. The door remained closed, not a sound came from the rooms, a death-like silence arose from the whole palace. And Don Vigilio did not even ring, but, after a fresh bow, discreetly turned the door-handle.

A single petroleum lamp, placed on a table, lighted the ante-room, a large apartment with bare fresco-painted walls, simulating hangings of red and gold, draped regularly all around in the antique fashion. A few men's overcoats and two ladies' mantles lay on the chairs, whilst a pier table was littered with hats, and a servant sat there dozing, with his back to the wall.

However, as Don Vigilio stepped aside to allow Pierre to enter a first reception-room, hung with red *brocatelle*, a room but dimly lighted and which he imagined to be empty, the young priest found himself face to face with an apparition in black, a woman whose features he could not at first distinguish. Fortunately he heard his companion say, with a low bow, "Contessina, I have the honour to present to you Monsieur l'Abbé Pierre Froment, who arrived from France this morning."

Then, for a moment, Pierre remained alone with Benedetta in that deserted *salon*, in the sleepy glimmer of two lace-veiled lamps. At present, however, a sound of voices came from a room beyond, a larger apartment whose doorway, with folding doors thrown wide open, described a parallelogram of brighter light.

The young woman at once showed herself very affable, with perfect simplicity of manner: "Ah! I am happy to see you, Monsieur l'Abbé. I was afraid that your indisposition might be serious. You are quite recovered now, are you not?"

Pierre listened to her, fascinated by her slow and rather thick voice, in which restrained passion seemed to mingle with much prudent good sense. And at last he saw her, with her hair so heavy and so dark, her

skin so white, the whiteness of ivory. She had a round face, with somewhat full lips, a small refined nose, features as delicate as a child's. But it was especially her eyes that lived, immense eyes, whose infinite depths none could fathom. Was she slumbering? Was she dreaming? Did her motionless face conceal the ardent tension of a great saint and a great *amorosa*? So white, so young, and so calm, her every movement was harmonious, her appearance at once very staid, very noble, and very rhythmical. In her ears she wore two large pearls of matchless purity, pearls which had come from a famous necklace of her mother's, known throughout Rome.

Pierre apologised and thanked her. "You see me in confusion, madame," said he; "I should have liked to express to you this morning my gratitude for your great kindness."

He had hesitated to call her madame, remembering the plea brought forward in the suit for the dissolution of her marriage. But plainly enough everybody must call her madame. Moreover, her face had retained its calm and kindly expression.

"Consider yourself at home here, Monsieur l'Abbé," she responded, wishing to put him at his ease. "It is sufficient that our relative, Monsieur de la Choue, should be fond of you, and take interest in your work. I have, you know, much affection for him." Then her voice faltered slightly, for she realised that she ought to speak of the book, the one reason of Pierre's journey and her proffered hospitality. "Yes," she added, "the Viscount sent me your book. I read it and found it very beautiful. It disturbed me. But I am

only an *ignoramus*, and certainly failed to understand everything in it. We must talk it over together; you will explain your ideas to me, won't you, Monsieur l'Abbé?"

In her large clear eyes, which did not know how to lie, Pierre then read the surprise and emotion of a child's soul when confronted by disquieting and undreamt-of problems. So it was not she who had become impassioned and had desired to have him near her that she might sustain him and assist his victory. Once again, and this time very keenly, he suspected a secret influence, a hidden hand which was directing everything towards some unknown goal. However, he was charmed by so much simplicity and frankness in so beautiful, young, and noble a creature; and he gave himself to her after the exchange of those few words, and was about to tell her that she might absolutely dispose of him, when he was interrupted by the advent of another woman, whose tall, slight figure, also clad in black, stood out strongly against the luminous background of the further reception-room as seen through the open doorway.

"Well, Benedetta, have you sent Giacomo up to see?" asked the newcomer. "Don Vigilio has just come down and he is quite alone. It is improper."

"No, no, aunt. Monsieur l'Abbé is here," was the reply of Benedetta, hastening to introduce the young priest. "Monsieur l'Abbé Pierre Froment — The Princess Boccanera."

Ceremonious salutations were exchanged. The Princess must have been nearly sixty, but she laced herself so tightly that from behind one might have taken her

for a young woman. This tight lacing, however, was her last coquetry. Her hair, though still plentiful, was quite white, her eyebrows alone remaining black in her long, wrinkled face, from which projected the large obstinate nose of the family. She had never been beautiful, and had remained a spinster, wounded to the heart by the selection of Count Brandini, who had preferred her younger sister, Ernesta. From that moment she had resolved to seek consolation and satisfaction in family pride alone, the hereditary pride of the great name which she bore. The Boccaneras had already supplied two Popes to the Church, and she hoped that before she died her brother would become the third. She had transformed herself into his house-keeper, as it were, remaining with him, watching over him, and advising him, managing all the household affairs herself, and accomplishing miracles in order to conceal the slow ruin which was bringing the ceilings about their heads. If every Monday for thirty years past she had continued receiving a few intimates, all of them folks of the Vatican, it was from high political considerations, so that her drawing-room might remain a meeting-place of the black world, a power and a threat.

And Pierre divined by her greeting that she deemed him of little account, petty foreign priest that he was, not even a prelate. This too again surprised him, again brought the puzzling question to the fore: Why had he been invited, what was expected of him in this society from which the humble were usually excluded? Knowing the Princess to be austere devout, he at last fancied that she received him solely out of regard

for her kinsman, the Viscount, for in her turn she only found these words of welcome: "We are so pleased to receive good news of Monsieur de la Choue! He brought us such a beautiful pilgrimage two years ago."

Passing the first through the doorway, she at last ushered the young priest into the adjoining reception-room. It was a spacious square apartment, hung with old yellow *brocatelle* of a flowery Louis XIV pattern. The lofty ceiling was adorned with a very fine paneling, carved and coloured, with gilded roses in each compartment. The furniture, however, was of all sorts. There were some high mirrors, a couple of superb gilded pier tables, and a few handsome seventeenth-century arm-chairs; but all the rest was wretched. A heavy round table of first-empire style, which had come nobody knew whence, caught the eye with a medley of anomalous articles picked up at some bazaar, and a quantity of cheap photographs littered the costly marble tops of the pier tables. No interesting article of *virtù* was to be seen. The old paintings on the walls were with two exceptions feebly executed. There was a delightful example of an unknown primitive master, a fourteenth-century Visitation, in which the Virgin had the stature and pure delicacy of a child of ten, whilst the Archangel, huge and superb, inundated her with a stream of dazzling, superhuman love; and in front of this hung an antique family portrait, depicting a very beautiful young girl in a turban, who was thought to be Cassia Boccanera, the *amorosa* and avengeress who had flung herself into the Tiber with her brother Ercole and the corpse of her lover, Flavio Corradini. Four lamps threw a broad, peaceful glow

over the faded room, and, like a melancholy sunset, tinged it with yellow. It looked grave and bare, with not even a flower in a vase to brighten it.

In a few words Donna Serafina at once introduced Pierre to the company; and in the silence, the pause which ensued in the conversation, he felt that every eye was fixed upon him as upon a promised and expected curiosity. There were altogether some ten persons present, among them being Dario, who stood talking with little Princess Celia Buongiovanni, whilst the elderly relative who had brought the latter sat whispering to a prelate, Monsignor Nani, in a dim corner. Pierre, however, had been particularly struck by the name of Consistorial-Advocate Morano, of whose position in the house Viscount de la Choue had thought proper to inform him in order to avert any unpleasant blunder. For thirty years past Morano had been Donna Serafina's *amico*. Their connection, formerly a guilty one, for the advocate had wife and children of his own, had in course of time, since he had been left a widower, become one of those *liaisons* which tolerant people excuse and except. Both parties were extremely devout and had certainly assured themselves of all needful "indulgences." And thus Morano was there in the seat which he had always taken for a quarter of a century past, a seat beside the chimney-piece, though as yet the winter fire had not been lighted, and when Donna Serafina had discharged her duties as mistress of the house, she returned to her own place in front of him, on the other side of the chimney.

When Pierre in his turn had seated himself near

Don Vigilio, who, silent and discreet, had already taken a chair, Dario resumed in a louder voice the story which he had been relating to Celia. Dario was a handsome man, of average height, slim and elegant. He wore a full beard, dark and carefully tended, and had the long face and pronounced nose of the Boccaneras, but the impoverishment of the family blood over a course of centuries had attenuated, softened as it were, any sharpness or undue prominence of feature.

"Oh! a beauty, an astounding beauty!" he repeated emphatically.

"Whose beauty?" asked Benedetta, approaching him.

Celia, who resembled the little Virgin of the primitive master hanging above her head, began to laugh. "Oh! Dario's speaking of a poor girl, a work-girl whom he met to-day," she explained.

Thereupon Dario had to begin his narrative again. It appeared that while passing along a narrow street near the Piazza Navona, he had perceived a tall, shapely girl of twenty, who was weeping and sobbing violently, prone upon a flight of steps. Touched particularly by her beauty, he had approached her and learnt that she had been working in the house outside which she was, a manufactory of wax beads, but that, slack times having come, the workshops had closed and she did not dare to return home, so fearful was the misery there. Amidst the downpour of her tears she raised such beautiful eyes to his that he ended by drawing some money from his pocket. But at this, crimson with confusion, she sprang to her feet, hiding her hands in the folds of her skirt, and refusing to

take anything. She added, however, that he might follow her if it so pleased him, and give the money to her mother. And then she hurried off towards the Ponte St'. Angelo.¹

"Yes, she was a beauty, a perfect beauty," repeated Dario with an air of ecstasy. "Taller than I, and slim though sturdy, with the bosom of a goddess. In fact, a real antique, a Venus of twenty, her chin rather bold, her mouth and nose of perfect form, and her eyes wonderfully pure and large! And she was bare-headed too, with nothing but a crown of heavy black hair, and a dazzling face, gilded, so to say, by the sun."

They had all begun to listen to him, enraptured, full of that passionate admiration for beauty which, in spite of every change, Rome still retains in her heart.

"Those beautiful girls of the people are becoming very rare," remarked Morano. "You might scour the Trastevere without finding any. However, this proves that there is at least one of them left."

"And what was your goddess's name?" asked Benedetta, smiling, amused and enraptured like the others.

"Pierina," replied Dario, also with a laugh.

"And what did you do with her?"

At this question the young man's excited face assumed an expression of discomfort and fear, like the face of a child on suddenly encountering some ugly creature amidst its play.

"Oh! don't talk of it," said he. "I felt very sorry afterwards. I saw such misery—enough to make one ill."

¹ Bridge of St. Angelo.

Yielding to his curiosity, it seemed, he had followed the girl across the Ponte St'. Angelo into the new district which was being built over the former castle meadows¹; and there, on the first floor of an abandoned house which was already falling into ruins, though the plaster was scarcely dry, he had come upon a frightful spectacle which still stirred his heart: a whole family, father and mother, children, and an infirm old uncle, dying of hunger and rotting in filth! He selected the most dignified words he could think of to describe the scene, waving his hand the while with a gesture of fright, as if to ward off some horrible vision.

"At last," he concluded, "I ran away, and you may be sure that I shan't go back again."

A general wagging of heads ensued in the cold, irksome silence which fell upon the room. Then Morano summed up the matter in a few bitter words, in which he accused the despoilers, the men of the Quirinal, of being the sole cause of all the frightful misery of Rome. Were not people even talking of the approaching nomination of Deputy Sacco as Minister of Finances—Sacco, that intriguer who had engaged in all sorts of underhand practices? His appointment would be the climax of impudence; bankruptcy would speedily and infallibly ensue.

Meantime Benedetta, who had fixed her eyes on Pierre, with his book in her mind, alone murmured: "Poor people, how very sad! But why not go back to see them?"

¹ The meadows around the Castle of St. Angelo. The district, now covered with buildings, is quite flat and was formerly greatly subject to floods. It is known as the *Quartiere dei Prati*.—*Trans.*

Pierre, out of his element and absent-minded during the earlier moments, had been deeply stirred by the latter part of Dario's narrative. His thoughts reverted to his apostolate amidst the misery of Paris, and his heart was touched with compassion at being confronted by the story of such fearful sufferings on the very day of his arrival in Rome. Unwittingly, impulsively, he raised his voice, and said aloud: "Oh! we will go to see them together, madame; you will take me. These questions impassion me so much."

The attention of everybody was then again turned upon the young priest. The others questioned him, and he realised that they were all anxious about his first impressions, his opinion of their city and of themselves. He must not judge Rome by mere outward appearances, they said. What effect had the city produced on him? How had he found it, and what did he think of it? Thereupon he politely apologised for his inability to answer them. He had not yet gone out, said he, and had seen nothing. But this answer was of no avail; they pressed him all the more keenly, and he fully understood that their object was to gain him over to admiration and love. They advised him, adjured him not to yield to any fatal disillusion, but to persist and wait until Rome should have revealed to him her soul.

"How long do you expect to remain among us, Monsieur l'Abbé?" suddenly inquired a courteous voice, with a clear but gentle ring.

It was Monsignor Nani, who, seated in the gloom, thus raised his voice for the first time. On several occasions it had seemed to Pierre that the prelate's keen blue eyes were steadily fixed upon him, though

all the while he pretended to be attentively listening to the drawling chatter of Celia's aunt. And before replying Pierre glanced at him. In his crimson-edged cassock, with a violet silk sash drawn tightly around his waist, Nani still looked young, although he was over fifty. His hair had remained *blond*, he had a straight refined nose, a mouth very firm yet very delicate of contour, and beautifully white teeth.

"Why, a fortnight or perhaps three weeks, Monsignor," replied Pierre.

The whole *salon* protested. What, three weeks! It was his pretension to know Rome in three weeks! Why, six weeks, twelve months, ten years were required! The first impression was always a disastrous one, and a long sojourn was needed for a visitor to recover from it.

"Three weeks!" repeated Donna Serafina with her disdainful air. "Is it possible for people to study one another and get fond of one another in three weeks? Those who come back to us are those who have learned to know us."

Instead of launching into exclamations like the others, Nani had at first contented himself with smiling, and gently waving his shapely hand, which bespoke his aristocratic origin. Then, as Pierre modestly explained himself, saying that he had come to Rome to attend to certain matters and would leave again as soon as those matters should have been concluded, the prelate, still smiling, summed up the argument with the remark: "Oh! Monsieur l'Abbé will stay with us for more than three weeks; we shall have the happiness of his presence here for a long time, I hope."

These words, though spoken with quiet cordiality, strangely disturbed the young priest. What was known, what was meant? He leant towards Don Vigilio, who had remained near him, still and ever silent, and in a whisper inquired: "Who is Monsignor Nani?"

The secretary, however, did not at once reply. His feverish face became yet more livid. Then his ardent eyes glanced round to make sure that nobody was watching him, and in a breath he responded: "He is the Assessor of the Holy Office."¹

This information sufficed, for Pierre was not ignorant of the fact that the assessor, who was present in silence at the meetings of the Holy Office, waited upon his Holiness every Wednesday evening after the sitting, to render him an account of the matters dealt with in the afternoon. This weekly audience, this hour spent with the Pope in a privacy which allowed of every subject being broached, gave the assessor an exceptional position, one of considerable power. Moreover the office led to the cardinalate; the only "rise" that could be given to the assessor was his promotion to the Sacred College.

Monsignor Nani, who seemed so perfectly frank and amiable, continued to look at the young priest with such an encouraging air that the latter felt obliged to go and occupy the seat beside him, which Celia's old aunt at last vacated. After all, was there not an omen of victory in meeting, on the very day of his arrival, a powerful prelate whose influence would perhaps open every door to him? He therefore felt

¹ Otherwise the Inquisition.

very touched when Monsignor Nani, immediately after the first words, inquired in a tone of deep interest, "And so, my dear child, you have published a book?"

After this, gradually mastered by his enthusiasm and forgetting where he was, Pierre unbosomed himself, and recounted the birth and progress of his burning love amidst the sick and the humble, gave voice to his dream of a return to the olden Christian community, and triumphed with the rejuvenescence of Catholicism, developing into the one religion of the universal democracy. Little by little he again raised his voice, and silence fell around him in the stern, antique reception-room, every one lending ear to his words with increasing surprise, with a growing coldness of which he remained unconscious.

At last Nani gently interrupted him, still wearing his perpetual smile, the faint irony of which, however, had departed. "No doubt, no doubt, my dear child," he said, "it is very beautiful, oh! very beautiful, well worthy of the pure and noble imagination of a Christian. But what do you count on doing now?"

"I shall go straight to the Holy Father to defend myself," answered Pierre.

A light, restrained laugh went round, and Donna Serafina expressed the general opinion by exclaiming: "The Holy Father isn't seen as easily as that."

Pierre, however, was quite impassioned. "Well, for my part," he rejoined, "I hope I shall see him. Have I not expressed his views? Have I not defended his policy? Can he let my book be condemned when I believe that I have taken inspiration from all that is best in him?"

"No doubt, no doubt," Nani again hastily replied, as if he feared that the others might be too brusque with the young enthusiast. "The Holy Father has such a lofty mind. And of course it would be necessary to see him. Only, my dear child, you must not excite yourself so much; reflect a little; take your time." And, turning to Benedetta, he added, "Of course his Eminence has not seen Abbé Froment yet. It would be well, however, that he should receive him to-morrow morning to guide him with his wise counsel."

Cardinal Boccanera never attended his sister's Monday-evening receptions. Still, he was always there in the spirit, like some absent sovereign master.

"To tell the truth," replied the Contessina, hesitating, "I fear that my uncle does not share Monsieur l'Abbé's views."

Nani again smiled. "Exactly; he will tell him things which it is good he should hear."

Thereupon it was at once settled with Don Vigilio that the latter would put down the young priest's name for an audience on the following morning at ten o'clock.

However, at that moment a cardinal came in, clad in town costume — his sash and his stockings red, but his simar black, with a red edging and red buttons. It was Cardinal Sarno, a very old intimate of the Boccaneras; and whilst he apologised for arriving so late, through press of work, the company became silent and deferentially clustered round him. This was the first cardinal Pierre had seen, and he felt greatly disappointed, for the newcomer had none of

the majesty, none of the fine port and presence to which he had looked forward. On the contrary, he was short and somewhat deformed, with the left shoulder higher than the right, and a worn, ashen face with lifeless eyes. To Pierre he looked like some old clerk of seventy, half stupefied by fifty years of office work, dulled and bent by incessantly leaning over his writing desk ever since his youth. And indeed that was Sarno's story. The puny child of a petty middle-class family, he had been educated at the *Seminario Romano*. Then later he had for ten years professed Canon Law at that same seminary, afterwards becoming one of the secretaries of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith. Finally, five and twenty years ago, he had been created a cardinal, and the jubilee of his cardinalate had recently been celebrated. Born in Rome, he had always lived there; he was the perfect type of the prelate who, through growing up in the shade of the Vatican, has become one of the masters of the world. Although he had never occupied any diplomatic post, he had rendered such important services to the Propaganda, by his methodical habits of work, that he had become president of one of the two commissions which furthered the interests of the Church in those vast countries of the west which are not yet Catholic. And thus, in the depths of his dim eyes, behind his low, dull-looking brow, the huge map of Christendom was stored away.

Nani himself had risen, full of covert respect for the unobtrusive but terrible man whose hand was everywhere, even in the most distant corners of the earth, although he had never left his office. As Nani knew,

despite his apparent nullity, Sarno, with his slow, methodical, ably organised work of conquest, possessed sufficient power to set empires in confusion.

"Has your Eminence recovered from that cold which distressed us so much?" asked Nani.

"No, no, I still cough. There is a most malignant passage at the offices. I feel as cold as ice as soon as I leave my room."

From that moment Pierre felt quite little, virtually lost. He was not even introduced to the Cardinal. And yet he had to remain in the room for nearly another hour, looking around and observing. That antiquated world then seemed to him puerile, as though it had lapsed into a mournful second childhood. Under all the apparent haughtiness and proud reserve he could divine real timidity, unacknowledged distrust, born of great ignorance. If the conversation did not become general, it was because nobody dared to speak out frankly; and what he heard in the corners was simply so much childish chatter, the petty gossip of the week, the trivial echoes of sacristies and drawing-rooms. People saw but little of one another, and the slightest incidents assumed huge proportions. At last Pierre ended by feeling as though he were transported into some *salon* of the time of Charles X, in one of the episcopal cities of the French provinces. No refreshments were served. Celia's old aunt secured possession of Cardinal Sarno; but, instead of replying to her, he simply wagged his head from time to time. Don Vigilio had not opened his mouth the whole evening. However, a conversation in a very low tone was started by Nani and Morano, to whom

Donna Serafina listened, leaning forward and expressing her approval by slowly nodding her head. They were doubtless speaking of the dissolution of Benedetta's marriage, for they glanced at the young woman gravely from time to time. And in the centre of the spacious room, in the sleepy glow of the lamps, there was only the young people, Benedetta, Dario, and Celia who seemed to be at all alive, chattering in undertones and occasionally repressing a burst of laughter.

All at once Pierre was struck by the great resemblance between Benedetta and the portrait of Cassia hanging on the wall. Each displayed the same delicate youth, the same passionate mouth, the same large, unfathomable eyes, set in the same round, sensible, healthy-looking face. In each there was certainly the same upright soul, the same heart of flame. Then a recollection came to Pierre, that of a painting by Guido Reni, the adorable, candid head of Beatrice Cenci, which, at that moment and to his thinking, the portrait of Cassia closely resembled. This resemblance stirred him and he glanced at Benedetta with anxious sympathy, as if all the fierce fatality of race and country were about to fall on her. But no, it could not be; she looked so calm, so resolute, and so patient! Besides, ever since he had entered that room he had noticed none other than signs of gay fraternal tenderness between her and Dario, especially on her side, for her face ever retained the bright serenity of a love which may be openly confessed. At one moment, it is true, Dario in a joking way had caught hold of her hands and pressed them; but while he

began to laugh rather nervously, with a brighter gleam darting from his eyes, she on her side, all composure, slowly freed her hands, as though theirs was but the play of old and affectionate friends. She loved him, though, it was visible, with her whole being and for her whole life.

At last when Dario, after stifling a slight yawn and glancing at his watch, had slipped off to join some friends who were playing cards at a lady's house, Benedetta and Celia sat down together on a sofa near Pierre; and the latter, without wishing to listen, overheard a few words of their confidential chat. The little Princess was the eldest daughter of Prince Matteo Buongiovanni, who was already the father of five children by an English wife, a Mortimer, to whom he was indebted for a dowry of two hundred thousand pounds. Indeed, the Buongiovanis were known as one of the few patrician families of Rome that were still rich, still erect among the ruins of the past, now crumbling on every side. They also numbered two popes among their forerunners, yet this had not prevented Prince Matteo from lending support to the Quirinal without quarrelling with the Vatican. Son of an American woman, no longer having the pure Roman blood in his veins, he was a more supple politician than other aristocrats, and was also, folks said, extremely grasping, struggling to be one of the last to retain the wealth and power of olden times, which he realised were condemned to death. Yet it was in his family, renowned for its superb pride and its continued magnificence, that a love romance had lately taken birth, a romance which was the subject of end-

less gossip: Celia had suddenly fallen in love with a young lieutenant to whom she had never spoken; her love was reciprocated, and the passionate attachment of the officer and the girl only found vent in the glances they exchanged on meeting each day during the usual drive through the Corso. Nevertheless Celia displayed a tenacious will, and after declaring to her father that she would never take any other husband, she was waiting, firm and resolute, in the certainty that she would ultimately secure the man of her choice. The worst of the affair was that the lieutenant, Attilio Sacco, happened to be the son of Deputy Sacco, a parvenu whom the black world looked down upon, as upon one sold to the Quirinal and ready to undertake the very dirtiest job.

"It was for me that Morano spoke just now," Celia murmured in Benedetta's ear. "Yes, yes, when he spoke so harshly of Attilio's father and that ministerial appointment which people are talking about. He wanted to give me a lesson."

The two girls had sworn eternal affection in their school-days, and Benedetta, the elder by five years, showed herself maternal. "And so," she said, "you've not become a whit more reasonable. You still think of that young man?"

"What! are you going to grieve me too, dear?" replied Celia. "I love Attilio and mean to have him. Yes, him and not another! I want him and I'll have him, because I love him and he loves me. It's simple enough."

Pierre glanced at her, thunderstruck. With her gentle virgin face she was like a candid, budding lily.

A brow and a nose of blossom-like purity; a mouth all innocence with its lips closing over pearly teeth, and eyes like spring water, clear and fathomless. And not a quiver passed over her cheeks of satiny freshness, no sign, however faint, of anxiety or inquisitiveness appeared in her candid glance. Did she think? Did she know? Who could have answered? She was virginity personified with all its redoubtable mystery.

"Ah! my dear," resumed Benedetta, "don't begin my sad story over again. One doesn't succeed in marrying the Pope and the King."

All tranquillity, Celia responded: "But you didn't love Prada, whereas I love Attilio. Life lies in that: one must love."

These words, spoken so naturally by that ignorant child, disturbed Pierre to such a point that he felt tears rising to his eyes. Love! yes, therein lay the solution of every quarrel, the alliance between the nations, the reign of peace and joy throughout the world! However, Donna Serafina had now risen, shrewdly suspecting the nature of the conversation which was impassioning the two girls. And she gave Don Vigilio a glance, which the latter understood, for he came to tell Pierre in an undertone that it was time to retire. Eleven o'clock was striking, and Celia went off with her aunt. Advocate Morano, however, doubtless desired to retain Cardinal Sarno and Nani for a few moments in order that they might privately discuss some difficulty which had arisen in the divorce proceedings. On reaching the outer reception-room, Benedetta, after kissing Celia on both cheeks, took leave of Pierre with much good grace.

"In answering the Viscount to-morrow morning," said she, "I shall tell him how happy we are to have you with us, and for longer than you think. Don't forget to come down at ten o'clock to see my uncle, the Cardinal."

Having climbed to the third floor again, Pierre and Don Vigilio, each carrying a candlestick which the servant had handed to them, were about to part for the night, when the former could not refrain from asking the secretary a question which had been worrying him for hours: "Is Monsignor Nani a very influential personage?"

Don Vigilio again became quite scared, and simply replied by a gesture, opening his arms as if to embrace the world. Then his eyes flashed, and in his turn he seemed to yield to inquisitiveness. "You already knew him, didn't you?" he inquired.

"I? not at all!"

"Really! Well, he knows you very well. Last Monday I heard him speak of you in such precise terms that he seemed to be acquainted with the slightest particulars of your career and your character."

"Why, I never even heard his name before."

"Then he must have procured information."

Thereupon Don Vigilio bowed and entered his room; whilst Pierre, surprised to find his door open, saw Victorine come out with her calm active air.

"Ah! Monsieur l'Abbé, I wanted to make sure that you had everything you were likely to want. There are candles, water, sugar, and matches. And what do you take in the morning, please? Coffee? No, a cup of milk with a roll. Very good; at eight o'clock, eh?"

And now rest and sleep well. I was awfully afraid of ghosts during the first nights I spent in this old palace! But I never saw a trace of one. The fact is, when people are dead, they are too well pleased, and don't want to break their rest!"

Then off she went, and Pierre at last found himself alone, glad to be able to shake off the strain imposed on him, to free himself from the discomfort which he had felt in that reception-room, among those people who in his mind still mingled and vanished like shadows in the sleepy glow of the lamps. Ghosts, thought he, are the old dead ones of long ago whose distressed spirits return to love and suffer in the breasts of the living of to-day. And, despite his long afternoon rest, he had never felt so weary, so desirous of slumber, confused and foggy as was his mind, full of the fear that he had hitherto not understood things aright. When he began to undress, his astonishment at being in that room returned to him with such intensity that he almost fancied himself another person. What did all those people think of his book? Why had he been brought to this cold dwelling whose hostility he could divine? Was it for the purpose of helping him or conquering him? And again in the yellow glimmer, the dismal sunset of the drawing-room, he perceived Donna Serafina and Advocate Morano on either side of the chimney-piece, whilst behind the calm yet passionate visage of Benedetta appeared the smiling face of Monsignor Nani, with cunning eyes and lips bespeaking indomitable energy.

He went to bed, but soon got up again, stifling, feeling such a need of fresh, free air that he opened

the window wide in order to lean out. But the night was black as ink, the darkness had submerged the horizon. A mist must have hidden the stars in the firmament; the vault above seemed opaque and heavy like lead; and yonder in front the houses of the Trastevere had long since been asleep. Not one of all their windows glittered; there was but a single gas-light shining, all alone and far away, like a lost spark. In vain did Pierre seek the Janiculum. In the depths of that ocean of nihility all sunk and vanished, Rome's four and twenty centuries, the ancient Palatine and the modern Quirinal, even the giant dome of St. Peter's, blotted out from the sky by the flood of gloom. And below him he could not see, he could not even hear the Tiber, the dead river flowing past the dead city.

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III

At a quarter to ten o'clock on the following morning Pierre came down to the first floor of the mansion for his audience with Cardinal Boccanera. He had awoke free of all fatigue and again full of courage and candid enthusiasm; nothing remaining of his strange despondency of the previous night, the doubts and suspicions which had then come over him. The morning was so fine, the sky so pure and so bright, that his heart once more palpitated with hope.

On the landing he found the folding doors of the first ante-room wide open. While closing the gala saloons which overlooked the street, and which were rotting with old age and neglect, the Cardinal still used the reception-rooms of one of his grand-uncles, who in the eighteenth century had risen to the same ecclesiastical dignity as himself. There was a suite of four immense rooms, each sixteen feet high, with windows facing the lane which sloped down towards the Tiber; and the sun never entered them, shut off as it was by the black houses across the lane. Thus the installation, in point of space, was in keeping with the display and pomp of the old-time princely dignitaries of the Church. But no repairs were ever made, no care was taken of anything, the hangings were frayed and ragged, and dust preyed on the fur-

niture, amidst an unconcern which seemed to betoken some proud resolve to stay the course of time.

Pierre experienced a slight shock as he entered the first room, the servants' ante-chamber. Formerly two pontifical *gente d'armi* in full uniform had always stood there amidst a stream of lackeys; and the single servant now on duty seemed by his phantom-like appearance to increase the melancholiness of the vast and gloomy hall. One was particularly struck by an altar facing the windows, an altar with red drapery surmounted by a *baldachino* with red hangings, on which appeared the escutcheon of the Boccaneras, the winged dragon spitting flames with the device, *Bocca nera, Alma rossa*. And the grand-uncle's red hat, the old huge ceremonial hat, was also there, with the two cushions of red silk, and the two antique parasols which were taken in the coach each time his Eminence went out. And in the deep silence it seemed as if one could almost hear the faint noise of the termites preying for a century past upon all this dead splendour, which would have fallen into dust at the slightest touch of a feather broom.

The second ante-room, that was formerly occupied by the secretary, was also empty, and it was only in the third one, the *anticamera nobile*, that Pierre found Don Vigilio. With his retinue reduced to what was strictly necessary, the Cardinal had preferred to have his secretary near him — at the door, so to say, of the old throne-room, where he gave audience. And Don Vigilio, so thin and yellow, and quivering with fever, sat there like one lost, at a small, common, black table covered with papers. Raising his head from among a

batch of documents, he recognised Pierre, and in a low voice, a faint murmur amidst the silence, he said, "His Eminence is engaged. Please wait."

Then he again turned to his reading, doubtless to escape all attempts at conversation.

Not daring to sit down, Pierre examined the apartment. It looked perhaps yet more dilapidated than the others, with its hangings of green damask worn by age and resembling the faded moss on ancient trees. The ceiling, however, had remained superb. Within a frieze of gilded and coloured ornaments was a fresco representing the Triumph of Amphitrite, the work of one of Raffaello's pupils. And, according to antique usage, it was here that the *berretta*, the red cap, was placed, on a credence, below a large crucifix of ivory and ebony.

As Pierre grew used to the half-light, however, his attention was more particularly attracted by a recently painted full-length portrait of the Cardinal in ceremonial costume — cassock of red moire, rochet of lace, and *cappa* thrown like a royal mantle over his shoulders. In these vestments of the Church the tall old man of seventy retained the proud bearing of a prince, clean shaven, but still boasting an abundance of white hair which streamed in curls over his shoulders. He had the commanding visage of the Boccaneras, a large nose and a large thin-lipped mouth in a long face intersected by broad lines; and the eyes which lighted his pale countenance were indeed the eyes of his race, very dark, yet sparkling with ardent life under bushy brows which had remained quite black. With laurels about his head he would have resembled

a Roman emperor, very handsome and master of the world, as though indeed the blood of Augustus pulsed in his veins.

Pierre knew his story which this portrait recalled. Educated at the College of the Nobles, Pio Boccanera had but once absented himself from Rome, and that when very young, hardly a deacon, but nevertheless appointed oblegate to convey a *berretta* to Paris. On his return his ecclesiastical career had continued in sovereign fashion. Honours had fallen on him naturally, as by right of birth. Ordained by Pius IX himself, afterwards becoming a Canon of the Vatican Basilica, and *Cameriere segreto*, he had risen to the post of Majordomo about the time of the Italian occupation, and in 1874 had been created a Cardinal. For the last four years, moreover, he had been Papal Chamberlain (*Camerlingo*), and folks whispered that Leo XIII had appointed him to that post, even as he himself had been appointed to it by Pius IX, in order to lessen his chance of succeeding to the pontifical throne; for although the conclave in choosing Leo had set aside the old tradition that the Camerlingo was ineligible for the papacy, it was not probable that it would again dare to infringe that rule. Moreover, people asserted that, even as had been the case in the reign of Pius, there was a secret warfare between the Pope and his Camerlingo, the latter remaining on one side, condemning the policy of the Holy See, holding radically different opinions on all things, and silently waiting for the death of Leo, which would place power in his hands with the duty of summoning the conclave, and provisionally watching over the affairs

and interests of the Church until a new Pope should be elected. Behind Cardinal Pio's broad, stern brow, however, in the glow of his dark eyes, might there not also be the ambition of actually rising to the papacy, of repeating the career of Gioachino Pecci, Camerlingo and then Pope, all tradition notwithstanding? With the pride of a Roman prince Pio knew but Rome; he almost gloried in being totally ignorant of the modern world; and verily he showed himself very pious, austere religious, with a full firm faith into which the faintest doubt could never enter.

But a whisper drew Pierre from his reflections. Don Vigilio, in his prudent way, invited him to sit down: "You may have to wait some time: take a stool."

Then he began to cover a large sheet of yellowish paper with fine writing, while Pierre seated himself on one of the stools ranged alongside the wall in front of the portrait. And again the young man fell into a reverie, picturing in his mind a renewal of all the princely pomp of the old-time cardinals in that antique room. To begin with, as soon as nominated, a cardinal gave public festivities, which were sometimes very splendid. During three days the reception-rooms remained wide open, all could enter, and from room to room ushers repeated the names of those who came — patricians, people of the middle class, poor folks, all Rome indeed, whom the new cardinal received with sovereign kindness, as a king might receive his subjects. Then there was quite a princely retinue; some cardinals carried five hundred people about with them, had no fewer than sixteen distinct

offices in their households, lived, in fact, amidst a perfect court. Even when life subsequently became simplified, a cardinal, if he were a prince, still had a right to a gala train of four coaches drawn by black horses. Four servants preceded him in liveries, emblazoned with his arms, and carried his hat, cushion, and parasols. He was also attended by a secretary in a mantle of violet silk, a train-bearer in a gown of violet woollen stuff, and a gentleman in waiting, wearing an Elizabethan style of costume, and bearing the *berretta* with gloved hands. Although the household had then become smaller, it still comprised an *auditore* specially charged with the congregational work, a secretary employed exclusively for correspondence, a chief usher who introduced visitors, a gentleman in attendance for the carrying of the *berretta*, a train-bearer, a chaplain, a majordomo and a *valet-de-chambre*, to say nothing of a flock of underlings, lackeys, cooks, coachmen, grooms, quite a population, which filled the vast mansions with bustle. And with these attendants Pierre mentally sought to fill the three spacious ante-rooms now so deserted; the stream of lackeys in blue liveries broidered with emblazonry, the world of abbés and prelates in silk mantles appeared before him, again setting magnificent and passionate life under the lofty ceilings, illuminating all the semi-gloom with resuscitated splendour.

But nowadays — particularly since the Italian occupation of Rome — nearly all the great fortunes of the Roman princes have been exhausted, and the pomp of the great dignitaries of the Church has disappeared. The ruined patricians have kept aloof from badly

remunerated ecclesiastical offices to which little renown attaches, and have left them to the ambition of the petty *bourgeoisie*. Cardinal Boccanera, the last prince of ancient nobility invested with the purple, received scarcely more than 30,000 *lire*¹ a year to enable him to sustain his rank, that is 22,000 *lire*,² the salary of his post as Camerlingo, and various small sums derived from other functions. And he would never have made both ends meet had not Donna Serafina helped him with the remnants of the former family fortune which he had long previously surrendered to his sisters and his brother. Donna Serafina and Benedetta lived apart, in their own rooms, having their own table, servants, and personal expenses. The Cardinal only had his nephew Dario with him, and he never gave a dinner or held a public reception. His greatest source of expense was his carriage, the heavy pair-horse coach, which ceremonial usage compelled him to retain, for a cardinal cannot go on foot through the streets of Rome. However, his coachman, an old family servant, spared him the necessity of keeping a groom by insisting on taking entire charge of the carriage and the two black horses, which, like himself, had grown old in the service of the Boccaneras. There were two footmen, father and son, the latter born in the house. And the cook's wife assisted in the kitchen. However, yet greater reductions had been made in the ante-rooms, where the staff, once so brilliant and numerous, was now simply composed of two petty priests, Don Vigilio, who was at once secretary, *auditore*, and majordomo,

¹ 1,200*l.*² 880*l.*

and Abbé Paparelli, who acted as train-bearer, chaplain, and chief usher. There, where a crowd of salaried people of all ranks had once moved to and fro, filling the vast halls with bustle and colour, one now only beheld two little black cassocks gliding noiselessly along, two unobtrusive shadows flitting about amidst the deep gloom of the lifeless rooms.

And Pierre now fully understood the haughty unconcern of the Cardinal, who suffered time to complete its work of destruction in that ancestral mansion, to which he was powerless to restore the glorious life of former times! Built for that shining life, for the sovereign display of a sixteenth-century prince, it was now deserted and empty, crumbling about the head of its last master, who had no servants left him to fill it, and would not have known how to pay for the materials which repairs would have necessitated. And so, since the modern world was hostile, since religion was no longer sovereign, since men had changed, and one was drifting into the unknown, amidst the hatred and indifference of new generations, why not allow the old world to collapse in the stubborn, motionless pride born of its ancient glory? Heroes alone died standing, without relinquishing aught of their past, preserving the same faith until their final gasp, beholding, with pain-fraught bravery and infinite sadness, the slow last agony of their divinity. And the Cardinal's tall figure, his pale, proud face, so full of sovereign despair and courage, expressed that stubborn determination to perish beneath the ruins of the old social edifice rather than change a single one of its stones.

Pierre was roused by a rustling of furtive steps, a little mouse-like trot, which made him raise his head. A door in the wall had just opened, and to his surprise there stood before him an abbé of some forty years, fat and short, looking like an old maid in a black skirt, a very old maid in fact, so numerous were the wrinkles on his flabby face. It was Abbé Paparelli, the train-bearer and usher, and on seeing Pierre he was about to question him, when Don Vigilio explained matters.

"Ah! very good, very good, Monsieur l'Abbé Froment. His Eminence will condescend to receive you, but you must wait, you must wait."

Then, with his silent rolling walk, he returned to the second ante-room, where he usually stationed himself.

Pierre did not like his face—the face of an old female devotee, whitened by celibacy, and ravaged by stern observance of the rites; and so, as Don Vigilio—his head weary and his hands burning with fever—had not resumed his work, the young man ventured to question him. Oh! Abbé Paparelli, he was a man of the liveliest faith, who from simple humility remained in a modest post in his Eminence's service. On the other hand, his Eminence was pleased to reward him for his devotion by occasionally condescending to listen to his advice.

As Don Vigilio spoke, a faint gleam of irony, a kind of veiled anger appeared in his ardent eyes. However, he continued to examine Pierre, and gradually seemed reassured, appreciating the evident frankness of this foreigner who could hardly belong

to any clique. And so he ended by departing somewhat from his continual sickly distrust, and even engaged in a brief chat.

"Yes, yes," he said, "there is a deal of work sometimes, and rather hard work too. His Eminence belongs to several Congregations, the Consistorial, the Holy Office, the Index, the Rites. And all the documents concerning the business which falls to him come into my hands. I have to study each affair, prepare a report on it, clear the way, so to say. Besides which all the correspondence is carried on through me. Fortunately his Eminence is a holy man, and intrigues neither for himself nor for others, and this enables us to taste a little peace."

Pierre took a keen interest in these particulars of the life led by a prince of the Church. He learnt that the Cardinal rose at six o'clock, summer and winter alike. He said his mass in his chapel, a little room which simply contained an altar of painted wood, and which nobody but himself ever entered. His private apartments were limited to three rooms — a bed-room, dining-room, and study — all very modest and small, contrived indeed by partitioning off portions of one large hall. And he led a very retired life, exempt from all luxury, like one who is frugal and poor. At eight in the morning he drank a cup of cold milk for his breakfast. Then, when there were sittings of the Congregations to which he belonged, he attended them; otherwise he remained at home and gave audience. Dinner was served at one o'clock, and afterwards came the siesta, lasting until five in summer and until four at other seasons — a sacred moment

when a servant would not have dared even to knock at the door. On awaking, if it were fine, his Eminence drove out towards the ancient Appian Way, returning at sunset when the *Ave Maria* began to ring. And finally, after again giving audience between seven and nine, he supped and retired into his room, where he worked all alone or went to bed. The cardinals wait upon the Pope on fixed days, two or three times each month, for purposes connected with their functions. For nearly a year, however, the Camerlingo had not been received in private audience by his Holiness, and this was a sign of disgrace, a proof of secret warfare, of which the entire black world spoke in prudent whispers.

"His Eminence is sometimes a little rough," continued Don Vigilio in a soft voice. "But you should see him smile when his niece the Contessina, of whom he is very fond, comes down to kiss him. If you have a good reception, you know, you will owe it to the Contessina."

At this moment the secretary was interrupted. A sound of voices came from the second ante-room, and forthwith he rose to his feet, and bent very low at sight of a stout man in a black cassock, red sash, and black hat, with twisted cord of red and gold, whom Abbé Paparelli was ushering in with a great display of deferential genuflections. Pierre also had risen at a sign from Don Vigilio, who found time to whisper to him, "Cardinal Sanguinetti, Prefect of the Congregation of the Index."

Meantime Abbé Paparelli was lavishing attentions on the prelate, repeating with an expression of blissful

satisfaction: "Your most reverend Eminence was expected. I have orders to admit your most reverend Eminence at once. His Eminence the Grand Penitentiary is already here."

Sanguinetti, loud of voice and sonorous of tread, spoke out with sudden familiarity, "Yes, yes, I know. A number of importunate people detained me! One can never do as one desires. But I am here at last."

He was a man of sixty, squat and fat, with a round and highly coloured face distinguished by a huge nose, thick lips, and bright eyes which were always on the move. But he more particularly struck one by his active, almost turbulent, youthful vivacity, scarcely a white hair as yet showing among his brown and carefully tended locks, which fell in curls about his temples. Born at Viterbo, he had studied at the seminary there before completing his education at the Università Gregoriana in Rome. His ecclesiastical appointments showed how rapidly he had made his way, how supple was his mind: first of all secretary to the nunciature at Lisbon; then created titular Bishop of Thebes, and entrusted with a delicate mission in Brazil; on his return appointed nuncio first at Brussels and next at Vienna; and finally raised to the cardinalate, to say nothing of the fact that he had lately secured the suburban episcopal see of Frascati.¹ Trained to business, having dealt with every nation in Europe, he had nothing against him but his ambition, of which he made too open a display, and his spirit of intrigue, which was ever

¹ Cardinals York and Howard were Bishops of Frascati. — *Trans.*

restless. It was said that he was now one of the irreconcilables who demanded that Italy should surrender Rome, though formerly he had made advances to the Quirinal. In his wild passion to become the next Pope he rushed from one opinion to the other, giving himself no end of trouble to gain people from whom he afterwards parted. He had twice already fallen out with Leo XIII, but had deemed it politic to make his submission. In point of fact, given that he was an almost openly declared candidate to the papacy, he was wearing himself out by his perpetual efforts, dabbling in too many things, and setting too many people agog.

Pierre, however, had only seen in him the Prefect of the Congregation of the Index; and the one idea which struck him was that this man would decide the fate of his book. And so, when the Cardinal had disappeared and Abbé Paparelli had returned to the second ante-room, he could not refrain from asking Don Vigilio, "Are their Eminences Cardinal Sanguinetti and Cardinal Boccanera very intimate, then?"

An irrepressible smile contracted the secretary's lips, while his eyes gleamed with an irony which he could no longer subdue: "Very intimate — oh! no, no — they see one another when they can't do otherwise."

Then he explained that considerable deference was shown to Cardinal Boccanera's high birth, and that his colleagues often met at his residence, when, as happened to be the case that morning, any grave affair presented itself, requiring an interview apart from the usual official meetings. Cardinal Sanguinetti, he added, was the son of a petty medical man of Viterbo.

"No, no," he concluded, "their Eminences are not at all intimate. It is difficult for men to agree when they have neither the same ideas nor the same character, especially too when they are in each other's way."

Don Vigilio spoke these last words in a lower tone, as if talking to himself and still retaining his sharp smile. But Pierre scarcely listened, absorbed as he was in his own worries. "Perhaps they have met to discuss some affair connected with the Index?" said he.

Don Vigilio must have known the object of the meeting. However, he merely replied that, if the Index had been in question, the meeting would have taken place at the residence of the Prefect of that Congregation. Thereupon Pierre, yielding to his impatience, was obliged to put a straight question. "You know of my affair — the affair of my book," he said. "Well, as his Eminence is a member of the Congregation, and all the documents pass through your hands, you might be able to give me some useful information. I know nothing as yet and am so anxious to know!"

At this Don Vigilio relapsed into scared disquietude. He stammered, saying that he had not seen any documents, which was true. "Nothing has yet reached us," he added; "I assure you I know nothing."

Then, as the other persisted, he signed to him to keep quiet, and again turned to his writing, glancing furtively towards the second ante-room as if he believed that Abbé Paparelli was listening. He had certainly said too much, he thought, and he made himself very small, crouching over the table, and melting, fading away in his dim corner.

Pierre again fell into a reverie, a prey to all the mystery which enveloped him — the sleepy, antique sadness of his surroundings. Long minutes went by; it was nearly eleven when the sound of a door opening and a buzz of voices roused him. Then he bowed respectfully to Cardinal Sanguinetti, who went off accompanied by another cardinal, a very thin and tall man, with a grey, bony, ascetic face. Neither of them, however, seemed even to see the petty foreign priest who bent low as they went by. They were chatting aloud in familiar fashion.

“Yes! the wind is falling; it is warmer than yesterday.”

“We shall certainly have the sirocco to-morrow.”

Then solemn silence again fell on the large, dim room. Don Vigilio was still writing, but his pen made no noise as it travelled over the stiff yellow paper. However, the faint tinkle of a cracked bell was suddenly heard, and Abbé Paparelli, after hastening into the throne-room for a moment, returned to summon Pierre, whom he announced in a restrained voice: “Monsieur l’Abbé Pierre Froment.”

The spacious throne-room was like the other apartments, a virtual ruin. Under the fine ceiling of carved and gilded wood-work, the red wall-hangings of *brocattelle*, with a large palm pattern, were falling into tatters. A few holes had been patched, but long wear had streaked the dark purple of the silk — once of dazzling magnificence — with pale hues. The curiosity of the room was its old throne, an arm-chair upholstered in red silk, on which the Holy Father had sat when visiting Cardinal Pio’s grand-uncle.

This chair was surmounted by a canopy, likewise of red silk, under which hung the portrait of the reigning Pope. And, according to custom, the chair was turned towards the wall, to show that none might sit on it. The other furniture of the apartment was made up of sofas, arm-chairs, and chairs, with a marvellous Louis Quatorze table of gilded wood, having a top of mosaic-work representing the rape of Europa.

But at first Pierre only saw Cardinal Boccanera standing by the table which he used for writing. In his simple black cassock, with red edging and red buttons, the Cardinal seemed to him yet taller and prouder than in the portrait which showed him in ceremonial costume. There was the same curly white hair, the same long, strongly marked face, with large nose and thin lips, and the same ardent eyes, illuminating the pale countenance from under bushy brows which had remained black. But the portrait did not express the lofty tranquil faith which shone in this handsome face, a complete certainty of what truth was, and an absolute determination to abide by it for ever.

Boccanera had not stirred, but with black, fixed glance remained watching his visitor's approach; and the young priest, acquainted with the usual ceremonial, knelt and kissed the large ruby which the prelate wore on his hand. However, the Cardinal immediately raised him.

"You are welcome here, my dear son. My niece spoke to me about you with so much sympathy that I am happy to receive you." With these words Pio seated himself near the table, as yet not telling

Pierre to take a chair, but still examining him whilst speaking slowly and with studied politeness: "You arrived yesterday morning, did you not, and were very tired?"

"Your Eminence is too kind — yes, I was worn out, as much through emotion as fatigue. This journey is one of such gravity for me."

The Cardinal seemed indisposed to speak of serious matters so soon. "No doubt; it is a long way from Paris to Rome," he replied. "Nowadays the journey may be accomplished with fair rapidity, but formerly how interminable it was!" Then speaking yet more slowly: "I went to Paris once — oh! a long time ago, nearly fifty years ago — and then for barely a week. A large and handsome city; yes, yes, a great many people in the streets, extremely well-bred people, a nation which has accomplished great and admirable things. Even in these sad times one cannot forget that France was the eldest daughter of the Church. But since that one journey I have not left Rome —"

Then he made a gesture of quiet disdain, expressive of all he left unsaid. What was the use of journeying to a land of doubt and rebellion? Did not Rome suffice — Rome, which governed the world — the Eternal City which, when the times should be accomplished, would become the capital of the world once more?

Silently glancing at the Cardinal's lofty stature, the stature of one of the violent war-like princes of long ago, now reduced to wearing that simple cassock, Pierre deemed him superb with his proud conviction that Rome sufficed unto herself. But that stubborn resolve to remain in ignorance, that determination to

take no account of other nations excepting to treat them as vassals, disquieted him when he reflected on the motives that had brought him there. And as silence had again fallen he thought it politic to approach the subject he had at heart by words of homage.

"Before taking any other steps," said he, "I desired to express my profound respect for your Eminence; for in your Eminence I place my only hope; and I beg your Eminence to be good enough to advise and guide me."

With a wave of the hand Boccanera thereupon invited Pierre to take a chair in front of him. "I certainly do not refuse you my counsel, my dear son," he replied. "I owe my counsel to every Christian who desires to do well. But it would be wrong for you to rely on my influence. I have none. I live entirely apart from others; I cannot and will not ask for anything. However, this will not prevent us from chatting." Then, approaching the question in all frankness, without the slightest artifice, like one of brave and absolute mind who fears no responsibility however great, he continued: "You have written a book, have you not? — 'New Rome,' I believe — and you have come to defend this book which has been denounced to the Congregation of the Index. For my own part I have not yet read it. You will understand that I cannot read everything. I only see the works that are sent to me by the Congregation which I have belonged to since last year; and, besides, I often content myself with the reports which my secretary draws up for me. However, my niece Benedetta has read your book, and has told me that it is

not lacking in interest. It first astonished her somewhat, and then greatly moved her. So I promise you that I will go through it and study the incriminated passages with the greatest care."

Pierre profited by the opportunity to begin pleading his cause. And it occurred to him that it would be best to give his references at once. "Your Eminence will realise how stupefied I was when I learnt that proceedings were being taken against my book," he said. "Monsieur le Vicomte Philibert de la Choue, who is good enough to show me some friendship, does not cease repeating that such a book is worth the best of armies to the Holy See."

"Oh! De la Choue, De la Choue!" repeated the Cardinal with a pout of good-natured disdain. "I know that De la Choue considers himself a good Catholic. He is in a slight degree our relative, as you know. And when he comes to Rome and stays here, I willingly see him, on condition however that no mention is made of certain subjects on which it would be impossible for us to agree. To tell the truth, the Catholicism preached by De la Choue — worthy, clever man though he is — his Catholicism, I say, with his corporations, his working-class clubs, his cleansed democracy and his vague socialism, is after all merely so much literature!"

This pronouncement struck Pierre, for he realised all the disdainful irony contained in it — an irony which touched himself. And so he hastened to name his other reference, whose authority he imagined to be above discussion: "His Eminence Cardinal Bergerot has been kind enough to signify his full approval of my book."

At this Boccanera's face suddenly changed. It no longer wore an expression of derisive blame, tinged with the pity that is prompted by a child's ill-considered action fated to certain failure. A flash of anger now lighted up the Cardinal's dark eyes, and a pugnacious impulse hardened his entire countenance. "In France," he slowly resumed, "Cardinal Bergerot no doubt has a reputation for great piety. We know little of him in Rome. Personally, I have only seen him once, when he came to receive his hat. And I would not therefore allow myself to judge him if his writings and actions had not recently saddened my believing soul. Unhappily, I am not the only one; you will find nobody here, of the Sacred College, who approves of his doings." Boccanera paused, then in a firm voice concluded: "Cardinal Bergerot is a Revolutionary!"

This time Pierre's surprise for a moment forced him to silence. A Revolutionary — good heavens! a Revolutionary — that gentle pastor of souls, whose charity was inexhaustible, whose one dream was that Jesus might return to earth to ensure at last the reign of peace and justice! So words did not have the same signification in all places; into what religion had he now tumbled that the faith of the poor and the humble should be looked upon as a mere insurrectional, condemnable passion? As yet unable to understand things aright, Pierre nevertheless realised that discussion would be both discourteous and futile, and his only remaining desire was to give an account of his book, explain and vindicate it. But at his first words the Cardinal interposed.

"No, no, my dear son. It would take us too long

and I wish to read the passages. Besides, there is an absolute rule. All books which meddle with the faith are condemnable and pernicious. Does your book show perfect respect for dogma ? ”

“ I believe so, and I assure your Eminence that I have had no intention of writing a work of negation.”

“ Good : I may be on your side if that is true. Only, in the contrary case, I have but one course to advise you, which is to withdraw your work, condemn it, and destroy it without waiting until a decision of the Index compels you to do so. Whosoever has given birth to scandal must stifle it and expiate it, even if he have to cut into his own flesh. The only duties of a priest are humility and obedience, the complete annihilation of self before the sovereign will of the Church. And, besides, why write at all ? For there is already rebellion in expressing an opinion of one’s own. It is always the temptation of the devil which puts a pen in an author’s hand. Why, then, incur the risk of being for ever damned by yielding to the pride of intelligence and domination ? Your book again, my dear son — your book is literature, literature ! ”

This expression again repeated was instinct with so much contempt that Pierre realised all the wretchedness that would fall upon the poor pages of his apostolate on meeting the eyes of this prince who had become a saintly man. With increasing fear and admiration he listened to him, and beheld him growing greater and greater.

“ Ah ! faith, my dear son, everything is in faith — perfect, disinterested faith — which believes for the

sole happiness of believing! How restful it is to bow down before the mysteries without seeking to penetrate them, full of the tranquil conviction that, in accepting them, one possesses both the certain and the final! Is not the highest intellectual satisfaction that which is derived from the victory of the divine over the mind, which it disciplines, and contents so completely that it knows desire no more? And apart from that perfect equilibrium, that explanation of the unknown by the divine, no durable peace is possible for man. If one desires that truth and justice should reign upon earth, it is in God that one must place them. He that does not believe is like a battlefield, the scene of every disaster. Faith alone can tranquillise and deliver."

For an instant Pierre remained silent before the great figure rising up in front of him. At Lourdes he had only seen suffering humanity rushing thither for health of the body and consolation of the soul; but here was the intellectual believer, the mind that needs certainty, finding satisfaction, tasting the supreme enjoyment of doubting no more. He had never previously heard such a cry of joy at living in obedience without anxiety as to the morrow of death. He knew that Bocanera's youth had been somewhat stormy, traversed by acute attacks of sensuality, a flaring of the red blood of his ancestors; and he marvelled at the calm majesty which faith had at last implanted in this descendant of so violent a race, who had no passion remaining in him but that of pride.

"And yet," Pierre at last ventured to say in a timid, gentle voice, "if faith remains essential and immu-

table, forms change. From hour to hour evolution goes on in all things — the world changes.”

“That is not true!” exclaimed the Cardinal, “the world does not change. It continually tramps over the same ground, loses itself, strays into the most abominable courses, and it continually has to be brought back into the right path. That is the truth. In order that the promises of Christ may be fulfilled, is it not necessary that the world should return to its starting point, its original innocence? Is not the end of time fixed for the day when men shall be in possession of the full truth of the Gospel? Yes, truth is in the past, and it is always to the past that one must cling if one would avoid the pitfalls which evil imaginations create. All those fine novelties, those mirages of that famous so-called progress, are simply traps and snares of the eternal tempter, causes of perdition and death. Why seek any further, why constantly incur the risk of error, when for eighteen hundred years the truth has been known? Truth! why it is in Apostolic and Roman Catholicism as created by a long succession of generations! What madness to desire to change it when so many lofty minds, so many pious souls have made of it the most admirable of monuments, the one instrument of order in this world, and of salvation in the next!”

Pierre, whose heart had contracted, refrained from further protest, for he could no longer doubt that he had before him an implacable adversary of his most cherished ideas. Chilled by a covert fear, as though he felt a faint breath, as of a distant wind from a land of ruins, pass over his face, bringing with it the mortal cold of a sepulchre, he bowed respectfully whilst the

Cardinal, rising to his full height, continued in his obstinate voice, resonant with proud courage: "And if Catholicism, as its enemies pretend, be really stricken unto death, it must die standing and in all its glorious integrality. You hear me, Monsieur l'Abbé — not one concession, not one surrender, not a single act of cowardice! Catholicism is such as it is, and cannot be otherwise. No modification of the divine certainty, the entire truth, is possible. The removal of the smallest stone from the edifice could only prove a cause of instability. Is this not evident? You cannot save old houses by attacking them with the pickaxe under pretence of decorating them. You only enlarge the fissures. Even if it were true that Rome were on the eve of falling into dust, the only result of all the repairing and patching would be to hasten the catastrophe. And instead of a noble death, met unflinchingly, we should then behold the basest of agonies, the death throes of a coward who struggles and begs for mercy! For my part I wait. I am convinced that all that people say is but so much horrible falsehood, that Catholicism has never been firmer, that it imbibes eternity from the one and only source of life. But should the heavens indeed fall, on that day I should be here, amidst these old and crumbling walls, under these old ceilings whose beams are being devoured by the worms, and it is here, erect, among the ruins, that I should meet my end, repeating my *credo* for the last time."

His final words fell more slowly, full of haughty sadness, whilst with a sweeping gesture he waved his arms towards the old, silent, deserted palace around him, whence life was withdrawing day by day. Had

an involuntary presentiment come to him, did the faint cold breath from the ruins also fan his own cheeks? All the neglect into which the vast rooms had fallen was explained by his words; and a superb, despondent grandeur enveloped this prince and cardinal, this uncompromising Catholic who, withdrawing into the dim half-light of the past, braved with a soldier's heart the inevitable downfall of the olden world.

Deeply impressed, Pierre was about to take his leave when, to his surprise, a little door opened in the hangings. "What is it? Can't I be left in peace for a moment?" exclaimed Boccanera with sudden impatience.

Nevertheless, Abbé Paparelli, fat and sleek, glided into the room without the faintest sign of emotion. And he whispered a few words in the ear of the Cardinal, who, on seeing him, had become calm again. "What curate?" asked Boccanera. "Oh! yes, Santobono, the curate of Frascati. I know—tell him I cannot see him just now."

Paparelli, however, again began whispering in his soft voice, though not in so low a key as previously, for some of his words could be overheard. The affair was urgent, the curate was compelled to return home, and had only a word or two to say. And then, without awaiting consent, the train-bearer ushered in the visitor, a *protégé* of his, whom he had left just outside the little door. And for his own part he withdrew with the tranquillity of a retainer who, whatever the modesty of his office, knows himself to be all powerful.

Pierre, who was momentarily forgotten, looked at the visitor—a big fellow of a priest, the son of a

peasant evidently, and still near to the soil. He had an ungainly, bony figure, huge feet and knotted hands, with a seamy tanned face lighted by extremely keen black eyes. Five and forty and still robust, his chin and cheeks bristling, and his cassock, overlarge, hanging loosely about his big projecting bones, he suggested a bandit in disguise. Still there was nothing base about him; the expression of his face was proud. And in one hand he carried a small wicker basket carefully covered over with fig-leaves.

Santobono at once bent his knees and kissed the Cardinal's ring, but with hasty unconcern, as though only some ordinary piece of civility were in question. Then, with that commingling of respect and familiarity which the little ones of the world often evince towards the great, he said, "I beg your most reverend Eminence's forgiveness for having insisted. But there were people waiting, and I should not have been received if my old friend Paparelli had not brought me by way of that door. Oh! I have a very great service to ask of your Eminence, a real service of the heart. But first of all may I be allowed to offer your Eminence a little present?"

The Cardinal listened with a grave expression. He had been well acquainted with Santobono in the years when he had spent the summer at Frascati, at a princely residence which the Boccaneras had possessed there—a villa rebuilt in the seventeenth century, surrounded by a wonderful park, whose famous terrace overlooked the Campagna, stretching far and bare like the sea. This villa, however, had since been sold, and on some vineyards, which had fallen to

Benedetta's share, Count Prada, prior to the divorce proceedings, had begun to erect quite a district of little pleasure houses. In former times, when walking out, the Cardinal had condescended to enter and rest in the dwelling of Santobono, who officiated at an antique chapel dedicated to St. Mary of the Fields, without the town. The priest had his home in a half-ruined building adjoining this chapel, and the charm of the place was a walled garden which he cultivated himself with the passion of a true peasant.

"As is my rule every year," said he, placing his basket on the table, "I wished that your Eminence might taste my figs. They are the first of the season. I gathered them expressly this morning. You used to be so fond of them, your Eminence, when you condescended to gather them from the tree itself. You were good enough to tell me that there wasn't another tree in the world that produced such fine figs."

The Cardinal could not help smiling. He was indeed very fond of figs, and Santobono spoke truly: his fig-tree was renowned throughout the district. "Thank you, my dear Abbé," said Boccanera, "you remember my little failings. Well, and what can I do for you?"

Again he became grave, for, in former times, there had been unpleasant discussions between him and the curate, a lack of agreement which had angered him. Born at Nemi, in the core of a fierce district, Santobono belonged to a violent family, and his eldest brother had died of a stab. He himself had always professed ardently patriotic opinions. It was said that he had all but taken up arms for Garibaldi; and,

on the day when the Italians had entered Rome, force had been needed to prevent him from raising the flag of Italian unity above his roof. His passionate dream was to behold Rome mistress of the world, when the Pope and the King should have embraced and made cause together. Thus the Cardinal looked on him as a dangerous revolutionary, a renegade who imperilled Catholicism.

"Oh! what your Eminence can do for me, what your Eminence can do if only condescending and willing!" repeated Santobono in an ardent voice, clasping his big knotty hands. And then, breaking off, he inquired, "Did not his Eminence Cardinal Sanguinetti explain my affair to your most reverend Eminence?"

"No, the Cardinal simply advised me of your visit, saying that you had something to ask of me."

Whilst speaking Boccanera's face had clouded over, and it was with increased sternness of manner that he again waited. He was aware that the priest had become Sanguinetti's "client" since the latter had been in the habit of spending weeks together at his suburban see of Frascati. Walking in the shadow of every cardinal who is a candidate to the papacy, there are familiars of low degree who stake the ambition of their life on the possibility of that cardinal's election. If he becomes Pope some day, if they themselves help him to the throne, they enter the great pontifical family in his train. It was related that Sanguinetti had once already extricated Santobono from a nasty difficulty: the priest having one day caught a marauding urchin in the act of climbing his wall, had beaten the little fellow with such severity that he had ultimately

died of it. However, to Santobono's credit it must be added that his fanatical devotion to the Cardinal was largely based upon the hope that he would prove the Pope whom men awaited, the Pope who would make Italy the sovereign nation of the world.

"Well, this is my misfortune," he said. "Your Eminence knows my brother Agostino, who was gardener at the villa for two years in your Eminence's time. He is certainly a very pleasant and gentle young fellow, of whom nobody has ever complained. And so it is hard to understand how such an accident can have happened to him, but it seems that he has killed a man with a knife at Genzano, while walking in the street in the evening. I am dreadfully distressed about it, and would willingly give two fingers of my right hand to extricate him from prison. However, it occurred to me that your Eminence would not refuse me a certificate stating that Agostino was formerly in your Eminence's service, and that your Eminence was always well pleased with his quiet disposition."

But the Cardinal flatly protested: "I was not at all pleased with Agostino. He was wildly violent, and I had to dismiss him precisely because he was always quarrelling with the other servants."

"Oh! how grieved I am to hear your Eminence say that! So it is true, then, my poor little Agostino's disposition has really changed! Still there is always a way out of a difficulty, is there not? You can still give me a certificate, first arranging the wording of it. A certificate from your Eminence would have such a favourable effect upon the law officers."

"No doubt," replied Boccanera; "I can understand that, but I will give no certificate."

"What! does your most reverend Eminence refuse my prayer?"

"Absolutely! I know that you are a priest of perfect morality, that you discharge the duties of your ministry with strict punctuality, and that you would be deserving of high commendation were it not for your political fancies. Only your fraternal affection is now leading you astray. I cannot tell a lie to please you."

Santobono gazed at him in real stupefaction, unable to understand that a prince, an all-powerful cardinal, should be influenced by such petty scruples, when the entire question was a mere knife thrust, the most commonplace and frequent of incidents in the yet wild land of the old Roman castles.

"A lie! a lie!" he muttered; "but surely it isn't lying just to say what is good of a man, leaving out all the rest, especially when a man has good points as Agostino certainly has. In a certificate, too, everything depends on the words one uses."

He stubbornly clung to that idea; he could not conceive that a person should refuse to soften the rigour of justice by an ingenious presentation of the facts. However, on acquiring a certainty that he would obtain nothing, he made a gesture of despair, his livid face assuming an expression of violent rancour, whilst his black eyes flamed with restrained passion.

"Well, well! each looks on truth in his own way," he said. "I shall go back to tell his Eminence Cardinal Sanguinetti. And I beg your Eminence not to be

displeased with me for having disturbed your Eminence to no purpose. By the way, perhaps the figs are not yet quite ripe; but I will take the liberty to bring another basketful towards the end of the season, when they will be quite nice and sweet. A thousand thanks and a thousand felicities to your most reverend Eminence."

Santobono went off backwards, his big bony figure bending double with repeated genuflections. Pierre, whom the scene had greatly interested, in him beheld a specimen of the petty clergy of Rome and its environs, of whom people had told him before his departure from Paris. This was not the *scagnozzo*, the wretched famished priest whom some nasty affair brings from the provinces, who seeks his daily bread on the pavements of Rome; one of the herd of begowned beggars searching for a livelihood among the crumbs of Church life, voraciously fighting for chance masses, and mingling with the lowest orders in taverns of the worst repute. Nor was this the country priest of distant parts, a man of crass ignorance and superstition, a peasant among the peasants, treated as an equal by his pious flock, which is careful not to mistake him for the Divinity, and which, whilst kneeling in all humility before the parish saint, does not bend before the man who from that saint derives his livelihood. At Frascati the officiating minister of a little church may receive a stipend of some nine hundred *lire* a year,¹ and he has only bread and meat to buy if his garden yields him wine and fruit and vege-

¹ About 36*l*. One is reminded of Goldsmith's line: "And passing rich with forty pounds a year." — *Trans*.

tables. This one, Santobono, was not without education; he knew a little theology and a little history, especially the history of the past grandeur of Rome, which had inflamed his patriotic heart with the mad dream that universal domination would soon fall to the portion of renascent Rome, the capital of united Italy. But what an insuperable distance still remained between this petty Roman clergy, often very worthy and intelligent, and the high clergy, the high dignitaries of the Vatican! Nobody that was not at least a prelate seemed to count.

"A thousand thanks to your most reverend Eminence, and may success attend all your Eminence's desires."

With these words Santobono finally disappeared, and the Cardinal returned to Pierre, who also bowed preparatory to taking his leave.

"To sum up the matter, Monsieur l'Abbé," said Boccanera, "the affair of your book presents certain difficulties. As I have told you, I have no precise information, I have seen no documents. But knowing that my niece took an interest in you, I said a few words on the subject to Cardinal Sanguinetti, the Prefect of the Index, who was here just now. And he knows little more than I do, for nothing has yet left the Secretary's hands. Still he told me that the denunciation emanated from personages of rank and influence, and applied to numerous pages of your work, in which it was said there were passages of the most deplorable character as regards both discipline and dogma."

Greatly moved by the idea that he had hidden foes,

secret adversaries who pursued him in the dark, the young priest responded: "Oh! denounced, denounced! If your Eminence only knew how that word pains my heart! And denounced, too, for offences which were certainly involuntary, since my one ardent desire was the triumph of the Church! All I can do, then, is to fling myself at the feet of the Holy Father and entreat him to hear my defence."

Boccanera suddenly became very grave again. A stern look rested on his lofty brow as he drew his haughty figure to its full height. "His Holiness," said he, "can do everything, even receive you, if such be his good pleasure, and absolve you also. But listen to me. I again advise you to withdraw your book yourself, to destroy it, simply and courageously, before embarking in a struggle in which you will reap the shame of being overwhelmed. Reflect on that."

Pierre, however, had no sooner spoken of the Pope than he had regretted it, for he realised that an appeal to the sovereign authority was calculated to wound the Cardinal's feelings. Moreover, there was no further room for doubt. Boccanera would be against his book, and the utmost that he could hope for was to gain his neutrality by bringing pressure to bear on him through those about him. At the same time he had found the Cardinal very plain spoken, very frank, far removed from all the secret intriguing in which the affair of his book was involved, as he now began to realise; and so it was with deep respect and genuine admiration for the prelate's strong and lofty character that he took leave of him.

"I am infinitely obliged to your Eminence," he

said, "and I promise that I will carefully reflect upon all that your Eminence has been kind enough to say to me."

On returning to the ante-room, Pierre there found five or six persons who had arrived during his audience, and were now waiting. There was a bishop, a domestic prelate, and two old ladies, and as he drew near to Don Vigilio before retiring, he was surprised to find him conversing with a tall, fair young fellow, a Frenchman, who, also in astonishment, exclaimed, "What! are you here in Rome, Monsieur l'Abbé?"

For a moment Pierre had hesitated. "Ah! I must ask your pardon, Monsieur Narcisse Habert," he replied, "I did not at first recognise you! It was the less excusable as I knew that you had been an *attaché* at our embassy here ever since last year."

Tall, slim, and elegant of appearance, Narcisse Habert had a clear complexion, with eyes of a bluish, almost mauvish, hue, a fair frizzy beard, and long curling fair hair cut short over the forehead in the Florentine fashion. Of a wealthy family of militant Catholics, chiefly members of the bar or bench, he had an uncle in the diplomatic profession, and this had decided his own career. Moreover, a place at Rome was marked out for him, for he there had powerful connections. He was a nephew by marriage of Cardinal Sarno, whose sister had married another of his uncles, a Paris notary; and he was also cousin german of Monsignor Gamba del Zoppo, a *Cameriere segreto*, and son of one of his aunts, who had married an Italian colonel. And in some measure for these reasons he had been attached to the embassy to the Holy See, his superiors

tolerating his somewhat fantastic ways, his everlasting passion for art which sent him wandering hither and thither through Rome. He was moreover very amiable and extremely well-bred; and it occasionally happened, as was the case that morning, that with his weary and somewhat mysterious air he came to speak to one or another of the cardinals on some real matter of business in the ambassador's name.

So as to converse with Pierre at his ease, he drew him into the deep embrasure of one of the windows. "Ah! my dear Abbé, how pleased I am to see you!" said he. "You must remember what pleasant chats we had when we met at Cardinal Bergerot's! I told you about some paintings which you were to see for your book, some miniatures of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. And now, you know, I mean to take possession of you. I'll show you Rome as nobody else could show it to you. I've seen and explored everything. Ah! there are treasures, such treasures! But in truth there is only one supreme work; one always comes back to one's particular passion. The Botticelli in the Sixtine Chapel — ah, the Botticelli!"

His voice died away, and he made a faint gesture as if overcome by admiration. Then Pierre had to promise that he would place himself in his hands and accompany him to the Sixtine Chapel. "You know why I am here," at last said the young priest. "Proceedings have been taken against my book; it has been denounced to the Congregation of the Index."

"Your book! is it possible?" exclaimed Narcisse: "a book like that with pages recalling the delightful St. Francis of Assisi!" And thereupon he obligingly

placed himself at Pierre's disposal. "But our ambassador will be very useful to you," he said. "He is the best man in the world, of charming affability, and full of the old French spirit. I will present you to him this afternoon or to-morrow morning at the latest; and since you desire an immediate audience with the Pope, he will endeavour to obtain one for you. His position naturally designates him as your intermediary. Still, I must confess that things are not always easily managed. Although the Holy Father is very fond of him, there are times when his Excellency fails, for the approaches are so extremely intricate."

Pierre had not thought of employing the ambassador's good offices, for he had naïvely imagined that an accused priest who came to defend himself would find every door open. However, he was delighted with Narcisse's offer, and thanked him as warmly as if the audience were already obtained.

"Besides," the young man continued, "if we encounter any difficulties I have relatives at the Vatican, as you know. I don't mean my uncle the Cardinal, who would be of no use to us, for he never stirs out of his office at the Propaganda, and will never apply for anything. But my cousin, Monsignor Gamba del Zoppo, is very obliging, and he lives in intimacy with the Pope, his duties requiring his constant attendance on him. So, if necessary, I will take you to see him, and he will no doubt find a means of procuring you an interview, though his extreme prudence keeps him perpetually afraid of compromising himself. However, it's understood, you may rely on me in every respect."

"Ah! my dear sir," exclaimed Pierre, relieved and

happy, "I heartily accept your offer. You don't know what balm your words have brought me; for ever since my arrival everybody has been discouraging me, and you are the first to restore my strength by looking at things in the true French way."

Then, lowering his voice, he told the *attaché* of his interview with Cardinal Boccanera, of his conviction that the latter would not help him, of the unfavourable information which had been given by Cardinal Sanguinetti, and of the rivalry which he had divined between the two prelates. Narcisse listened, smiling, and in his turn began to gossip confidentially. The rivalry which Pierre had mentioned, the premature contest for the tiara which Sanguinetti and Boccanera were waging, impelled to it by a furious desire to become the next Pope, had for a long time been revolutionising the black world. There was incredible intricacy in the depths of the affair; none could exactly tell who was pulling the strings, conducting the vast intrigue. As regards generalities it was simply known that Boccanera represented absolutism—the Church freed from all compromises with modern society, and waiting in immobility for the Deity to triumph over Satan, for Rome to be restored to the Holy Father, and for repentant Italy to perform penance for its sacrilege; whereas Sanguinetti, extremely politic and supple, was reported to harbour bold and novel ideas: permission to vote to be granted to all true Catholics,¹

¹Since the occupation of Rome by the Italian authorities, the supporters of the Church, obedient to the prohibition of the Vatican, have abstained from taking part in the political elections, this being their protest against the new order of things which they do not recognise. Various attempts have been made, however, to induce

a majority to be gained by this means in the Legislature; then, as a fatal corollary, the downfall of the House of Savoy, and the proclamation of a kind of republican federation of all the former petty States of Italy under the august protectorate of the Pope. On the whole, the struggle was between these two antagonistic elements—the first bent on upholding the Church by a rigorous maintenance of the old traditions, and the other predicting the fall of the Church if it did not follow the bent of the coming century. But all was steeped in so much mystery that people ended by thinking that, if the present Pope should live a few years longer, his successor would certainly be neither Boccanera nor Sanguinetti.

All at once Pierre interrupted Narcisse: “And Monsignor Nani, do you know him? I spoke with him yesterday evening. And there he is coming in now!”

Nani was indeed just entering the ante-room with his usual smile on his amiable pink face. His cassock of fine texture, and his sash of violet silk shone with discreet soft luxury. And he showed himself very amiable to Abbé Paparelli, who, accompanying him in all humility, begged him to be kind enough to wait until his Eminence should be able to receive him.

“Oh! Monsignor Nani,” muttered Narcisse, becoming serious, “he is a man whom it is advisable to have for a friend.”

Then, knowing Nani's history, he related it in an the Pope to give them permission to vote, many members of the Roman aristocracy considering the present course impolitic and even harmful to the interests of the Church. — *Trans.*

undertone. Born at Venice, of a noble but ruined family which had produced heroes, Nani, after first studying under the Jesuits, had come to Rome to perfect himself in philosophy and theology at the Collegio Romano, which was then also under Jesuit management. Ordained when three and twenty, he had at once followed a nuncio to Bavaria as private secretary; and then had gone as *auditore* to the nunciatures of Brussels and Paris, in which latter city he had lived for five years. Everything seemed to predestine him to diplomacy, his brilliant beginnings and his keen and encyclopædical intelligence; but all at once he had been recalled to Rome, where he was soon afterwards appointed Assessor to the Holy Office. It was asserted at the time that this was done by the Pope himself, who, being well acquainted with Nani, and desirous of having a person he could depend upon at the Holy Office, had given instructions for his recall, saying that he could render far more services at Rome than abroad. Already a domestic prelate, Nani had also lately become a Canon of St. Peter's and an apostolic prothonotary, with the prospect of obtaining a cardinal's hat whenever the Pope should find some other favourite who would please him better as assessor.

"Oh, Monsignor Nani!" continued Narcisse. "He's a superior man, thoroughly well acquainted with modern Europe, and at the same time a very saintly priest, a sincere believer, absolutely devoted to the Church, with the substantial faith of an intelligent politician—a belief different, it is true, from the narrow gloomy theological faith which we know so well in France. And this is one of the reasons why you will hardly

understand things here at first. The Roman prelates leave the Deity in the sanctuary and reign in His name, convinced that Catholicism is the human expression of the government of God, the only perfect and eternal government, beyond the pales of which nothing but falsehood and social danger can be found. While we in our country lag behind, furiously arguing whether there be a God or not, they do not admit that God's existence can be doubted, since they themselves are His delegated ministers; and they entirely devote themselves to playing their parts as ministers whom none can dispossess, exercising their power for the greatest good of humanity, and devoting all their intelligence, all their energy to maintaining themselves as the accepted masters of the nations. As for Monsignor Nani, after being mixed up in the politics of the whole world, he has for ten years been discharging the most delicate functions in Rome, taking part in the most varied and most important affairs. He sees all the foreigners who come to Rome, knows everything, has a hand in everything. Add to this that he is extremely discreet and amiable, with a modesty which seems perfect, though none can tell whether, with his light silent footstep, he is not really marching towards the highest ambition, the purple of sovereignty."

"Another candidate for the tiara," thought Pierre, who had listened passionately; for this man Nani interested him, caused him an instinctive disquietude, as though behind his pink and smiling face he could divine an infinity of obscure things. At the same time, however, the young priest but ill understood his friend, for he again felt bewildered by all this

strange Roman world, so different from what he had expected.

Nani had perceived the two young men and came towards them with his hand cordially outstretched: "Ah! Monsieur l'Abbé Froment, I am happy to meet you again. I won't ask you if you have slept well, for people always sleep well at Rome. Good-day, Monsieur Habert; your health has kept good I hope, since I met you in front of Bernini's Santa Teresa, which you admire so much.¹ I see that you know one another. That is very nice. I must tell you, Monsieur l'Abbé, that Monsieur Habert is a passionate lover of our city; he will be able to show you all its finest sights."

Then, in his affectionate way, he at once asked for information respecting Pierre's interview with the Cardinal. He listened attentively to the young man's narrative, nodding his head at certain passages, and occasionally restraining his sharp smile. The Cardinal's severity and Pierre's conviction that he would accord him no support did not at all astonish Nani. It seemed as if he had expected that result. However, on hearing that Cardinal Sanguinetti had been there that morning, and had pronounced the affair of the book to be very serious, he appeared to lose his self-control for a moment, for he spoke out with sudden vivacity:

"It can't be helped, my dear child, my intervention came too late. Directly I heard of the proceedings I went to his Eminence Cardinal Sanguinetti to tell him

¹ The allusion is to a statue representing St. Theresa in ecstacy, with the Angel of Death descending to transfix her with his dart. It stands in a transept of Sta. Maria della Vittoria. — *Trans.*

that the result would be an immense advertisement for your book. Was it sensible? What was the use of it? We know that you are inclined to be carried away by your ideas, that you are an enthusiast, and are prompt to do battle. So what advantage should we gain by embarrassing ourselves with the revolt of a young priest who might wage war against us with a book of which some thousands of copies have been sold already? For my part I desired that nothing should be done. And I must say that the Cardinal, who is a man of sense, was of the same mind. He raised his arms to heaven, went into a passion, and exclaimed that he was never consulted, that the blunder was already committed beyond recall, and that it was impossible to prevent process from taking its course since the matter had already been brought before the Congregation, in consequence of denunciations from authoritative sources, based on the gravest motives. Briefly, as he said, the blunder was committed, and I had to think of something else."

All at once Nani paused. He had just noticed that Pierre's ardent eyes were fixed upon his own, striving to penetrate his meaning. A faint flush then heightened the pinkiness of his complexion, whilst in an easy way he continued, unwilling to reveal how annoyed he was at having said too much: "Yes, I thought of helping you with all the little influence I possess, in order to extricate you from the worries in which this affair will certainly land you."

An impulse of revolt was stirring Pierre, who vaguely felt that he was perhaps being made game of. Why should he not be free to declare his faith, which was

so pure, so free from personal considerations, so full of glowing Christian charity? "Never," said he, "will I withdraw; never will I myself suppress my book, as I am advised to do. It would be an act of cowardice and falsehood, for I regret nothing, I disown nothing. If I believe that my book brings a little truth to light I cannot destroy it without acting criminally both towards myself and towards others. No, never! You hear me — never!"

Silence fell. But almost immediately he resumed: "It is at the knees of the Holy Father that I desire to make that declaration. He will understand me, he will approve me."

Nani no longer smiled; henceforth his face remained as it were closed. He seemed to be studying the sudden violence of the young priest with curiosity; then sought to calm him with his own tranquil kindness. "No doubt, no doubt," said he. "There is certainly great sweetness in obedience and humility. Still I can understand that, before anything else, you should desire to speak to his Holiness. And afterwards you will see — is that not so? — you will see —"

Then he evinced a lively interest in the suggested application for an audience. He expressed keen regret that Pierre had not forwarded that application from Paris, before even coming to Rome: in that course would have rested the best chance of a favourable reply. Pother of any kind was not liked at the Vatican, and if the news of the young priest's presence in Rome should only spread abroad, and the motives of his journey be discussed, all would be lost. Then, on learning that Narcisse had offered to present Pierre

to the French ambassador, Nani seemed full of anxiety, and deprecated any such proceeding: "No, no! don't do that—it would be most imprudent. In the first place you would run the risk of embarrassing the ambassador, whose position is always delicate in affairs of this kind. And then, too, if he failed—and my fear is that he might fail—yes, if he failed it would be all over; you would no longer have the slightest chance of obtaining an audience by any other means. For the Vatican would not like to hurt the ambassador's feelings by yielding to other influence after resisting his."

Pierre anxiously glanced at Narcisse, who wagged his head, embarrassed and hesitating. "The fact is," the *attaché* at last murmured, "we lately solicited an audience for a high French personage and it was refused, which was very unpleasant for us. Monsignor is right. We must keep our ambassador in reserve, and only utilise him when we have exhausted all other means." Then, noticing Pierre's disappointment, he added obligingly: "Our first visit therefore shall be for my cousin at the Vatican."

Nani, his attention again roused, looked at the young man in astonishment. "At the Vatican? You have a cousin there?"

"Why, yes — Monsignor Gamba del Zoppo."

"Gamba! Gamba! Yes, yes, excuse me, I remember now. Ah! so you thought of Gamba to bring influence to bear on his Holiness? That's an idea, no doubt; one must see — one must see."

He repeated these words again and again as if to secure time to see into the matter himself, to weigh

the *pros* and *cons* of the suggestion. Monsignor Gamba del Zoppo was a worthy man who played no part at the Papal Court, whose nullity indeed had become a byword at the Vatican. His childish stories, however, amused the Pope, whom he greatly flattered, and who was fond of leaning on his arm while walking in the gardens. It was during these strolls that Gamba easily secured all sorts of little favours. However, he was a remarkable poltroon, and had such an intense fear of losing his influence that he never risked a request without having convinced himself by long meditation that no possible harm could come to him through it.

"Well, do you know, the idea is not a bad one," Nani at last declared. "Yes, yes, Gamba can secure the audience for you, if he is willing. I will see him myself and explain the matter."

At the same time Nani did not cease advising extreme caution. He even ventured to say that it was necessary to be on one's guard with the papal *entourage*, for, alas! it was a fact his Holiness was so good, and had such a blind faith in the goodness of others, that he had not always chosen his familiars with the critical care which he ought to have displayed. Thus one never knew to what sort of man one might be applying, or in what trap one might be setting one's foot. Nani even allowed it to be understood that on no account ought any direct application to be made to his Eminence the Secretary of State, for even his Eminence was not a free agent, but found himself encompassed by intrigues of such intricacy that his best intentions were paralysed. And as Nani went on dis-

coursing in this fashion, in a very gentle, extremely unctuous manner, the Vatican appeared like some enchanted castle, guarded by jealous and treacherous dragons—a castle where one must not take a step, pass through a doorway, risk a limb, without having carefully assured oneself that one would not leave one's whole body there to be devoured.

Pierre continued listening, feeling colder and colder at heart, and again sinking into uncertainty. “*Mon Dieu!*” he exclaimed, “I shall never know how to act. You discourage me, Monsignor.”

At this Nani's cordial smile reappeared. “I, my dear child? I should be sorry to do so. I only want to repeat to you that you must wait and do nothing. Avoid all feverishness especially. There is no hurry, I assure you, for it was only yesterday that a *consul-tore* was chosen to report upon your book, so you have a good full month before you. Avoid everybody, live in such a way that people shall be virtually ignorant of your existence, visit Rome in peace and quietness—that is the best course you can adopt to forward your interests.” Then, taking one of the priest's hands between both his own, so aristocratic, soft, and plump, he added: “You will understand that I have my reasons for speaking to you like this. I should have offered my own services; I should have made it a point of honour to take you straight to his Holiness, had I thought it advisable. But I do not wish to mix myself up in the matter at this stage; I realise only too well that at the present moment we should simply make sad work of it. Later on—you hear me—later on, in the event of nobody else succeeding, I myself

will obtain you an audience: I formally promise it. But meanwhile, I entreat you, refrain from using those words "a new religion," which, unfortunately, occur in your book, and which I heard you repeat again only last night. There can be no new religion, my dear child; there is but one eternal religion, which is beyond all surrender and compromise—the Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman religion. And at the same time leave your Paris friends to themselves. Don't rely too much on Cardinal Bergerot, whose lofty piety is not sufficiently appreciated in Rome. I assure you that I am speaking to you as a friend."

Then, seeing how disabled Pierre appeared to be, half overcome already, no longer knowing in what direction to begin his campaign, he again strove to comfort him: "Come, come, things will right themselves; everything will end for the best, both for the welfare of the Church and your own. And now you must excuse me, I must leave you; I shall not be able to see his Eminence to-day, for it is impossible for me to wait any longer."

Abbé Paparelli, whom Pierre had noticed prowling around with his ears cocked, now hastened forward and declared to Monsignor Nani that there were only two persons to be received before him. But the prelate very graciously replied that he would come back again at another time, for the affair which he wished to lay before his Eminence was in no wise pressing. Then he withdrew, courteously bowing to everybody.

Narcisse Habert's turn came almost immediately afterwards. However, before entering the throne-room he pressed Pierre's hand, repeating, "So it is

understood. I will go to see my cousin at the Vatican to-morrow, and directly I get a reply I will let you know. We shall meet again soon I hope."

It was now past twelve o'clock, and the only remaining visitor was one of the two old ladies who seemed to have fallen asleep. At his little secretarial table Don Vigilio still sat covering huge sheets of yellow paper with fine handwriting, from which he only lifted his eyes at intervals to glance about him distrustfully, and make sure that nothing threatened him.

In the mournful silence which fell around, Pierre lingered for yet another moment in the deep embrasure of the window. Ah! what anxiety consumed his poor, tender, enthusiastic heart! On leaving Paris things had seemed so simple, so natural to him! He was unjustly accused, and he started off to defend himself, arrived and flung himself at the feet of the Holy Father, who listened to him indulgently. Did not the Pope personify living religion, intelligence to understand, justice based upon truth? And was he not, before aught else, the Father, the delegate of divine forgiveness and mercy, with arms outstretched towards all the children of the Church, even the guilty ones? Was it not meet, then, that he should leave his door wide open so that the humblest of his sons might freely enter to relate their troubles, confess their transgressions, explain their conduct, imbibe comfort from the source of eternal lovingkindness? And yet on the very first day of his, Pierre's, arrival, the doors closed upon him with a bang; he felt himself sinking into a hostile sphere, full of traps and pitfalls. One and all cried out to him "Beware!" as

if he were incurring the greatest dangers in setting one foot before the other. His desire to see the Pope became an extraordinary pretension, so difficult of achievement that it set the interests and passions and influences of the whole Vatican agog. And there was endless conflicting advice, long-discussed manœuvring, all the strategy of generals leading an army to victory, and fresh complications ever arising in the midst of a dim stealthy swarming of intrigues. Ah! good Lord! how different all this was from the charitable reception that Pierre had anticipated: the pastor's house standing open beside the high road for the admission of all the sheep of the flock, both those that were docile and those that had gone astray!

That which began to frighten Pierre, however, was the evil, the wickedness, which he could divine vaguely stirring in the gloom: Cardinal Bergerot suspected, dubbed a Revolutionary, deemed so compromising that he, Pierre, was advised not to mention his name again! The young priest once more saw Cardinal Boccanera's pout of disdain while speaking of his colleague. And then Monsignor Nani had warned him not to repeat those words "a new religion," as if it were not clear to everybody that they simply signified the return of Catholicism to the primitive purity of Christianity! Was that one of the crimes denounced to the Congregation of the Index? He had begun to suspect who his accusers were, and felt alarmed, for he was now conscious of secret subterranean plotting, a great stealthy effort to strike him down and suppress his work. All that surrounded him became suspicious. If he listened

to advice and temporised, it was solely to follow the same politic course as his adversaries, to learn to know them before acting. He would spend a few days in meditation, in surveying and studying that black world of Rome which to him had proved so unexpected. But, at the same time, in the revolt of his apostle-like faith, he swore, even as he had said to Nani, that he would never yield, never change either a page or a line of his book, but maintain it in its integrity in the broad daylight as the unshakable testimony of his belief. Even were the book condemned by the Index, he would not tender submission, withdraw aught of it. And should it become necessary he would quit the Church, he would go even as far as schism, continuing to preach the new religion and writing a new book, *Real Rome*, such as he now vaguely began to espy.

However, Don Vigilio had ceased writing, and gazed so fixedly at Pierre that the latter at last stepped up to him politely in order to take leave. And then the secretary, yielding, despite his fears, to a desire to confide in him, murmured, "He came simply on your account, you know; he wanted to ascertain the result of your interview with his Eminence."

It was not necessary for Don Vigilio to mention Nani by name; Pierre understood. "Really, do you think so?" he asked.

"Oh! there is no doubt of it. And if you take my advice you will do what he desires with a good grace, for it is absolutely certain that you will do it later on."

These words brought Pierre's disquietude and exasperation to a climax. He went off with a gesture of defiance. They would see if he would ever yield.

The three ante-rooms which he again crossed appeared to him blacker, emptier, more lifeless than ever. In the second one Abbé Paparelli saluted him with a little silent bow; in the first the sleepy lackey did not even seem to see him. A spider was weaving its web between the tassels of the great red hat under the *baldacchino*. Would not the better course have been to set the pick at work amongst all that rotting past, now crumbling into dust, so that the sunlight might stream in freely and restore to the purified soil the fruitfulness of youth?

IV

ON the afternoon of that same day Pierre, having leisure before him, at once thought of beginning his peregrinations through Rome by a visit on which he had set his heart. Almost immediately after the publication of "New Rome" he had been deeply moved and interested by a letter addressed to him from the Eternal City by old Count Orlando Prada, the hero of Italian independence and reunion, who, although unacquainted with him, had written spontaneously after a first hasty perusal of his book. And the letter had been a flaming protest, a cry of the patriotic faith still young in the heart of that aged man, who accused him of having forgotten Italy and claimed Rome, the new Rome, for the country which was at last free and united. Correspondence had ensued, and the priest, while clinging to his dream of Neo-Catholicism saving the world, had from afar grown attached to the man who wrote to him with such glowing love of country and freedom. He had eventually informed him of his journey, and promised to call upon him. But the hospitality which he had accepted at the Boccanera mansion now seemed to him somewhat of an impediment; for after Benedetta's kindly, almost affectionate, greeting, he felt that he could not, on the very first day and with-

out warning her, sally forth to visit the father of the man from whom she had fled and from whom she now asked the Church to part her for ever. Moreover, old Orlando was actually living with his son in a little palazzo which the latter had erected at the farther end of the *Via Venti Settembre*.

Before venturing on any step Pierre resolved to confide in the Contessina herself; and this seemed the easier as Viscount Philibert de la Choue had told him that the young woman still retained a filial feeling, mingled with admiration, for the old hero. And indeed, at the very first words which he uttered after lunch, Benedetta promptly retorted: "But go, Monsieur l'Abbé, go at once! Old Orlando, you know, is one of our national glories — you must not be surprised to hear me call him by his Christian name. All Italy does so, from pure affection and gratitude. For my part I grew up among people who hated him, who likened him to Satan. It was only later that I learned to know him, and then I loved him, for he is certainly the most just and gentle man in the world."

She had begun to smile, but timid tears were moistening her eyes at the recollection, no doubt, of the year of suffering she had spent in her husband's house, where her only peaceful hours had been those passed with the old man. And in a lower and somewhat tremulous voice she added: "As you are going to see him, tell him from me that I still love him, and, whatever happens, shall never forget his goodness."

So Pierre set out, and whilst he was driving in a cab towards the *Via Venti Settembre*, he recalled to mind the heroic story of old Orlando's life which had

been told him in Paris. It was like an epic poem, full of faith, bravery, and the disinterestedness of another age.

Born of a noble house of Milan, Count Orlando Prada had learnt to hate the foreigner at such an early age that, when scarcely fifteen, he already formed part of a secret society, one of the ramifications of the antique Carbonarism. This hatred of Austrian domination had been transmitted from father to son through long years, from the olden days of revolt against servitude, when the conspirators met by stealth in abandoned huts, deep in the recesses of the forests; and it was rendered the keener by the eternal dream of Italy delivered, restored to herself, transformed once more into a great sovereign nation, the worthy daughter of those who had conquered and ruled the world. Ah! that land of whilom glory, that unhappy, dismembered, parcelled Italy, the prey of a crowd of petty tyrants, constantly invaded and appropriated by neighbouring nations — how superb and ardent was that dream to free her from such long opprobrium! To defeat the foreigner, drive out the despots, awaken the people from the base misery of slavery, to proclaim Italy free and Italy united — such was the passion which then inflamed the young with inextinguishable ardour, which made the youthful Orlando's heart leap with enthusiasm. He spent his early years consumed by holy indignation, proudly and impatiently longing for an opportunity to give his blood for his country, and to die for her if he could not deliver her.

Quivering under the yoke, wasting his time in

sterile conspiracies, he was living in retirement in the old family residence at Milan, when, shortly after his marriage and his twenty-fifth birthday, tidings came to him of the flight of Pius IX and the Revolution of Rome.¹ And at once he quitted everything, wife and hearth, and hastened to Rome as if summoned thither by the call of destiny. This was the first time that he set out scouring the roads for the attainment of independence; and how frequently, yet again and again, was he to start upon fresh campaigns, never wearying, never disheartened! And now it was that he became acquainted with Mazzini, and for a moment was inflamed with enthusiasm for that mystical unitarian Republican. He himself indulged in an ardent dream of a Universal Republic, adopted the Mazzinian device, "*Dio e popolo*" (God and the people), and followed the procession which wended its way with great pomp through insurrectionary Rome. The time was one of vast hopes, one when people already felt a need of renovated religion, and looked to the coming of a humanitarian Christ who would redeem the world yet once again. But before long a man, a captain of the ancient days, Giuseppe Garibaldi, whose epic glory was dawning, made Orlando entirely his own, transformed him into a soldier whose sole cause was freedom and union. Orlando loved Garibaldi as though the latter were a demi-god, fought beside him in defence of Republican Rome, took part in the victory of Rieti over

¹ It was on November 24, 1848, that the Pope fled to Gaeta, consequent upon the insurrection which had broken out nine days previously. — *Trans.*

the Neapolitans, and followed the stubborn patriot in his retreat when he sought to succour Venice, compelled as he was to relinquish the Eternal City to the French army of General Oudinot, who came thither to reinstate Pius IX. And what an extraordinary and madly heroic adventure was that of Garibaldi and Venice! Venice, which Manin, another great patriot, a martyr, had again transformed into a republican city, and which for long months had been resisting the Austrians! And Garibaldi starts with a handful of men to deliver the city, charts thirteen fishing barks, loses eight in a naval engagement, is compelled to return to the Roman shores, and there in all wretchedness is bereft of his wife, Anita, whose eyes he closes before returning to America, where, once before, he had awaited the hour of insurrection. Ah! that land of Italy, which in those days rumbled from end to end with the internal fire of patriotism, where men of faith and courage arose in every city, where riots and insurrections burst forth on all sides like eruptions — it continued, in spite of every check, its invincible march to freedom!

Orlando returned to his young wife at Milan, and for two years lived there, almost in concealment, devoured by impatience for the glorious morrow which was so long in coming. Amidst his fever a gleam of happiness softened his heart; a son, Luigi, was born to him, but the birth killed the mother, and joy was turned into mourning. Then, unable to remain any longer at Milan, where he was spied upon, tracked by the police, suffering also too grievously from the foreign occupation, Orlando decided to realise the

little fortune remaining to him, and to withdraw to Turin, where an aunt of his wife took charge of the child. Count di Cavour, like a great statesman, was then already seeking to bring about independence, preparing Piedmont for the decisive rôle which it was destined to play. It was the time when King Victor Emmanuel evinced flattering cordiality towards all the refugees who came to him from every part of Italy, even those whom he knew to be Republicans, compromised and flying the consequences of popular insurrection. The rough, shrewd House of Savoy had long been dreaming of bringing about Italian unity to the profit of the Piedmontese monarchy, and Orlando well knew under what master he was taking service; but in him the Republican already went behind the patriot, and indeed he had begun to question the possibility of a united Republican Italy, placed under the protectorate of a liberal Pope, as Mazzini had at one time dreamed. Was that not indeed a chimera beyond realisation which would devour generation after generation if one obstinately continued to pursue it? For his part, he did not wish to die without having slept in Rome as one of the conquerors. Even if liberty was to be lost, he desired to see his country united and erect, returning once more to life in the full sunlight. And so it was with feverish happiness that he enlisted at the outset of the war of 1859; and his heart palpitated with such force as almost to rend his breast, when, after Magenta, he entered Milan with the French army — Milan which he had quitted eight years previously, like an exile, in despair. The treaty of Villafranca

which followed Solferino proved a bitter deception: Venetia was not secured, Venice remained enthralled. Nevertheless the Milanese was conquered from the foe, and then Tuscany and the duchies of Parma and Modena voted for annexation. So, at all events, the nucleus of the Italian star was formed; the country had begun to build itself up afresh around victorious Piedmont.

Then, in the following year, Orlando plunged into *epopœia* once more. Garibaldi had returned from his two sojourns in America, with the halo of a legend round him — paladin-like feats in the pampas of Uruguay, an extraordinary passage from Canton to Lima — and he had returned to take part in the war of 1859, forestalling the French army, overthrowing an Austrian marshal, and entering Como, Bergamo, and Brescia. And now, all at once, folks heard that he had landed at Marsala with only a thousand men — the Thousand of Marsala, the ever illustrious handful of braves! Orlando fought in the first rank, and Palermo after three days' resistance was carried. Becoming the dictator's favourite lieutenant, he helped him to organise a government, then crossed the straits with him, and was beside him on the triumphal entry into Naples, whose king had fled. There was mad audacity and valour at that time, an explosion of the inevitable; and all sorts of supernatural stories were current — Garibaldi invulnerable, protected better by his red shirt than by the strongest armour, Garibaldi routing opposing armies like an archangel, by merely brandishing his flaming sword! The Piedmontese on their side had defeated General

Lamoricière at Castelfidardo, and were invading the States of the Church. And Orlando was there when the dictator, abdicating power, signed the decree which annexed the Two Sicilies to the Crown of Italy; even as subsequently he took part in that forlorn attempt on Rome, when the rageful cry was "Rome or Death!"—an attempt which came to a tragic issue at Aspromonte, when the little army was dispersed by the Italian troops, and Garibaldi, wounded, was taken prisoner, and sent back to the solitude of his island of Caprera, where he became but a fisherman and a tiller of the rocky soil.¹

Six years of waiting again went by, and Orlando still dwelt at Turin, even after Florence had been chosen as the new capital. The Senate had acclaimed Victor Emmanuel, King of Italy; and Italy was indeed almost built, it lacked only Rome and Venice. But the great battles seemed all over, the epic era was closed; Venice was to be won by defeat. Orlando took part in the unlucky battle of Custozza, where he received two wounds, full of furious grief at the thought that Austria should be triumphant. But at that same moment the latter, defeated at Sadowa, relinquished Venetia, and five months later Orlando

¹ M. Zola's brief but glowing account of Garibaldi's glorious achievements has stirred many memories in my mind. My uncle, Frank Vizetelly, the war artist of the *Illustrated London News*, whose bones lie bleaching somewhere in the Soudan, was one of Garibaldi's constant companions throughout the memorable campaign of the Two Sicilies, and afterwards he went with him to Caprera. Later, in 1870, my brother, Edward Vizetelly, acted as orderly-officer to the general when he offered the help of his sword to France. — *Trans.*

satisfied his desire to be in Venice participating in the joy of triumph, when Victor Emmanuel made his entry amidst the frantic acclamations of the people. Rome alone remained to be won, and wild impatience urged all Italy towards the city; but friendly France had sworn to maintain the Pope, and this acted as a check. Then, for the third time, Garibaldi dreamt of renewing the feats of the old-world legends, and threw himself upon Rome like a soldier of fortune illumined by patriotism and free from every tie. And for the third time Orlando shared in that fine heroic madness destined to be vanquished at Mentana by the Pontifical Zouaves supported by a small French corps. Again wounded, he came back to Turin in almost a dying condition. But, though his spirit quivered, he had to resign himself; the situation seemed to have no outlet; only an upheaval of the nations could give Rome to Italy.

All at once the thunderclap of Sedan, of the downfall of France, resounded through the world; and then the road to Rome lay open, and Orlando, having returned to service in the regular army, was with the troops who took up position in the Campagna to ensure the safety of the Holy See, as was said in the letter which Victor Emmanuel wrote to Pius IX. There was, however, but the shadow of an engagement: General Kanzler's Pontifical Zouaves were compelled to fall back, and Orlando was one of the first to enter the city by the breach of the Porta Pia. Ah! that twentieth of September—that day when he experienced the greatest happiness of his life—a day of delirium, of complete triumph, which realised the

dream of so many years of terrible contest, the dream for which he had sacrificed rest and fortune, and given both body and mind!

Then came more than ten happy years in conquered Rome — in Rome adored, flattered, treated with all tenderness, like a woman in whom one has placed one's entire hope. From her he awaited so much national vigour, such a marvellous resurrection of strength and glory for the endowment of the young nation. Old Republican, old insurrectional soldier that he was, he had been obliged to adhere to the monarchy, and accept a senatorship. But then did not Garibaldi himself — Garibaldi his divinity — likewise call upon the King and sit in parliament? Mazzini alone, rejecting all compromises, was unwilling to rest content with a united and independent Italy that was not Republican. Moreover, another consideration influenced Orlando, the future of his son Luigi, who had attained his eighteenth birthday shortly after the occupation of Rome. Though he, Orlando, could manage with the crumbs which remained of the fortune he had expended in his country's service, he dreamt of a splendid destiny for the child of his heart. Realising that the heroic age was over, he desired to make a great politician of him, a great administrator, a man who should be useful to the mighty nation of the morrow; and it was on this account that he had not rejected royal favour, the reward of long devotion, desiring, as he did, to be in a position to help, watch, and guide Luigi. Besides, was he himself so old, so used-up, as to be unable to assist in organisation, even as he

had assisted in conquest? Struck by his son's quick intelligence in business matters, perhaps also instinctively divining that the battle would now continue on financial and economic grounds, he obtained him employment at the Ministry of Finances. And again he himself lived on, dreaming, still enthusiastically believing in a splendid future, overflowing with boundless hope, seeing Rome double her population, grow and spread with a wild vegetation of new districts, and once more, in his loving enraptured eyes, become the queen of the world.

But all at once came a thunderbolt. One morning, as he was going downstairs, Orlando was stricken with paralysis. Both his legs suddenly became lifeless, as heavy as lead. It was necessary to carry him up again, and never since had he set foot on the street pavement. At that time he had just completed his fifty-sixth year, and for fourteen years since he had remained in his arm-chair, as motionless as stone, he who had so impetuously trod every battlefield of Italy. It was a pitiful business, the collapse of a hero. And worst of all, from that room where he was for ever imprisoned, the old soldier beheld the slow crumbling of all his hopes, and fell into dismal melancholy, full of unacknowledged fear for the future. Now that the intoxication of action no longer dimmed his eyes, now that he spent his long and empty days in thought, his vision became clear. Italy, which he had desired to see so powerful, so triumphant in her unity, was acting madly, rushing to ruin, possibly to bankruptcy. Rome, which to him had ever been the one necessary capital, the city of unparalleled glory, requisite for

the sovereign people of to-morrow, seemed unwilling to take upon herself the part of a great modern metropolis ; heavy as a corpse she weighed with all her centuries on the bosom of the young nation. Moreover, his son Luigi distressed him. Rebellious to all guidance, the young man had become one of the devouring offsprings of conquest, eager to despoil that Italy, that Rome, which his father seemed to have desired solely in order that he might pillage them and batten on them. Orlando had vainly opposed Luigi's departure from the ministry, his participation in the frantic speculations on land and house property to which the mad building of the new districts had given rise. But at the same time he loved his son, and was reduced to silence, especially now when everything had succeeded with Luigi, even his most risky financial ventures, such as the transformation of the Villa Montefiori into a perfect town—a colossal enterprise in which many of great wealth had been ruined, but whence he himself had emerged with millions. And it was in part for this reason that Orlando, sad and silent, had obstinately restricted himself to one small room on the third floor of the little palazzo erected by Luigi in the Via Venti Settembre—a room where he lived cloistered with a single servant, subsisting on his own scanty income, and accepting nothing but that modest hospitality from his son.

As Pierre reached that new Via Venti Settembre¹

¹ The name—Twentieth September Street—was given to the thoroughfare to commemorate the date of the occupation of Rome by Victor Emmanuel's army. — *Trans.*

which climbs the side and summit of the Viminal hill, he was struck by the heavy sumptuousness of the new "palaces," which betokened among the moderns the same taste for the huge that marked the ancient Romans. In the warm afternoon glow, blent of purple and old gold, the broad, triumphant thoroughfare, with its endless rows of white house-fronts, bore witness to new Rome's proud hope of futurity and sovereign power. And Pierre fairly gasped when he beheld the Palazzo delle Finanze, or Treasury, a gigantic erection, a cyclopean cube with a profusion of columns, balconies, pediments, and sculptured work, to which the building mania had given birth in a day of immoderate pride. And on the other side of the street, a little higher up, before reaching the Villa Bonaparte, stood Count Prada's little palazzo.

After discharging his driver, Pierre for a moment remained somewhat embarrassed. The door was open, and he entered the vestibule; but, as at the mansion in the Via Giulia, no door porter or servant was to be seen. So he had to make up his mind to ascend the monumental stairs, which with their marble balustrades seemed to be copied, on a smaller scale, from those of the Palazzo Bocanera. And there was much the same cold bareness, tempered, however, by a carpet and red door-hangings, which contrasted vividly with the white stucco of the walls. The reception-rooms, sixteen feet high, were on the first floor, and as a door chanced to be ajar he caught a glimpse of two *salons*, one following the other, and both displaying quite modern richness, with a profusion of silk

and velvet hangings, gilt furniture, and lofty mirrors reflecting a pompous assemblage of stands and tables. And still there was nobody, not a soul, in that seemingly forsaken abode, which exhaled nought of woman's presence. Indeed Pierre was on the point of going down again to ring, when a footman at last presented himself.

"Count Prada, if you please."

The servant silently surveyed the little priest, and seemed to understand. "The father or the son?" he asked.

"The father, Count Orlando Prada."

"Oh! that's on the third floor." And he condescended to add: "The little door on the right-hand side of the landing. Knock loudly if you wish to be admitted."

Pierre indeed had to knock twice, and then a little withered old man of military appearance, a former soldier who had remained in the Count's service, opened the door and apologised for the delay by saying that he had been attending to his master's legs. Immediately afterwards he announced the visitor, and the latter, after passing through a dim and narrow ante-room, was lost in amazement on finding himself in a relatively small chamber, extremely bare and bright, with wall-paper of a light hue studded with tiny blue flowers. Behind a screen was an iron bedstead, the soldier's pallet, and there was no other furniture than the arm-chair in which the cripple spent his days, with a table of black wood placed near him, and covered with books and papers, and two old straw-seated chairs which served for the accommoda-

tion of the infrequent visitors. A few planks, fixed to one of the walls, did duty as book-shelves. However, the broad, clear, curtainless window overlooked the most admirable panorama of Rome that could be desired.

Then the room disappeared from before Pierre's eyes, and with a sudden shock of deep emotion he only beheld old Orlando, the old blanched lion, still superb, broad, and tall. A forest of white hair crowned his powerful head, with its thick mouth, fleshy broken nose, and large, sparkling, black eyes. A long white beard streamed down with the vigour of youth, curling like that of an ancient god. By that leonine muzzle one divined what great passions had growled within ; but all, carnal and intellectual alike, had erupted in patriotism, in wild bravery, and riotous love of independence. And the old stricken hero, his torso still erect, was fixed there on his straw-seated arm-chair, with lifeless legs buried beneath a black wrapper. Alone did his arms and hands live, and his face beam with strength and intelligence.

Orlando turned towards his servant, and gently said to him: "You can go away, Bastista. Come back in a couple of hours." Then, looking Pierre full in the face, he exclaimed in a voice which was still sonorous despite his seventy years : "So it's you at last, my dear Monsieur Froment, and we shall be able to chat at our ease. There, take that chair, and sit down in front of me."

He had noticed the glance of surprise which the young priest had cast upon the bareness of the room,

and he gaily added : " You will excuse me for receiving you in my cell. Yes, I live here like a monk, like an old invalided soldier, henceforth withdrawn from active life. My son long begged me to take one of the fine rooms downstairs. But what would have been the use of it ? I have no needs, and I scarcely care for feather beds, for my old bones are accustomed to the hard ground. And then too I have such a fine view up here, all Rome presenting herself to me, now that I can no longer go to her."

With a wave of the hand towards the window he sought to hide the embarrassment, the slight flush which came to him each time that he thus excused his son ; unwilling as he was to tell the true reason, the scruple of probity which had made him obstinately cling to his bare pauper's lodging.

" But it is very nice, the view is superb!" declared Pierre, in order to please him. " I am for my own part very glad to see you, very glad to be able to grasp your valiant hands, which accomplished so many great things."

Orlando made a fresh gesture, as though to sweep the past away. " Pooh! pooh! all that is dead and buried. Let us talk about you, my dear Monsieur Froment, you who are young and represent the present; and especially about your book, which represents the future! Ah! if you only knew how angry your book, your "New Rome," made me first of all."

He began to laugh, and took the book from off the table near him ; then, tapping on its cover with his big, broad hand, he continued : " No, you cannot imagine with what starts of protest I read your

book. The Pope, and again the Pope, and always the Pope! New Rome to be created by the Pope and for the Pope, to triumph thanks to the Pope, to be given to the Pope, and to fuse its glory in the glory of the Pope! But what about us? What about Italy? What about all the millions which we have spent in order to make Rome a great capital? Ah! only a Frenchman, and a Frenchman of Paris, could have written such a book! But let me tell you, my dear sir, if you are ignorant of it, that Rome has become the capital of the kingdom of Italy, that we here have King Humbert, and the Italian people, a whole nation which must be taken into account, and which means to keep Rome — glorious, resuscitated Rome — for itself!”

This juvenile ardour made Pierre laugh in turn. “Yes, yes,” said he, “you wrote me that. Only what does it matter from my point of view? Italy is but one nation, a part of humanity, and I desire concord and fraternity among all the nations, mankind reconciled, believing, and happy. Of what consequence, then, is any particular form of government, monarchy or republic, of what consequence is any question of a united and independent country, if all mankind forms but one free people subsisting on truth and justice?”

To only one word of this enthusiastic outburst did Orlando pay attention. In a lower tone, and with a dreamy air, he resumed: “Ah! a republic. In my youth I ardently desired one. I fought for one; I conspired with Mazzini, a saintly man, a believer, who was shattered by collision with the absolute. And then, too, one had to bow to practical necessities:

the most obstinate ended by submitting. And nowadays would a republic save us? In any case it would differ but little from our parliamentary monarchy. Just think of what goes on in France! And so why risk a revolution which would place power in the hands of the extreme revolutionists, the anarchists? We fear all that, and this explains our resignation. I know very well that a few think they can detect salvation in a republican federation, a reconstitution of all the former little states in so many republics, over which Rome would preside. The Vatican would gain largely by any such transformation; still one cannot say that it endeavours to bring it about; it simply regards the eventuality without disfavour. But it is a dream, a dream!"

At this Orlando's gaiety came back to him, with even a little gentle irony: "You don't know, I suppose, what it was that took my fancy in your book — for, in spite of all my protests, I have read it twice. Well, what pleased me was that Mazzini himself might almost have written it at one time. Yes! I found all my youth again in your pages, all the wild hope of my twenty-fifth year, the new religion of a humanitarian Christ, the pacification of the world effected by the Gospel! Are you aware that, long before your time, Mazzini desired the renovation of Christianity? He set dogma and discipline on one side and only retained morals. And it was new Rome, the Rome of the people, which he would have given as see to the universal Church, in which all the churches of the past were to be fused — Rome, the eternal and predestined city, the mother and queen,

whose domination was to arise anew to ensure the definitive happiness of mankind! Is it not curious that all the present-day Neo-Catholicism, the vague, spiritualistic awakening, the evolution towards communion and Christian charity, with which some are making so much stir, should be simply a return of the mystical and humanitarian ideas of 1848? Alas! I saw all that, I believed and burned, and I know in what a fine mess those flights into the azure of mystery landed us! So it cannot be helped, I lack confidence."

Then, as Pierre on his side was growing impassioned and sought to reply, he stopped him: "No, let me finish. I only want to convince you how absolutely necessary it was that we should take Rome and make her the capital of Italy. Without Rome new Italy could not have existed; Rome represented the glory of ancient time; in her dust lay the sovereign power which we wished to re-establish; she brought strength, beauty, eternity to those who possessed her. Standing in the middle of our country, she was its heart, and must assuredly become its life as soon as she should be awakened from the long sleep of ruin. Ah! how we desired her, amidst victory and amidst defeat, through years and years of frightful impatience! For my part I loved her, and longed for her, far more than for any woman, with my blood burning, and in despair that I should be growing old. And when we possessed her, our folly was a desire to behold her huge, magnificent, and commanding all at once, the equal of the other great capitals of Europe — Berlin, Paris, and London.

Look at her! she is still my only love, my only consolation now that I am virtually dead, with nothing alive in me but my eyes."

With the same gesture as before, he directed Pierre's attention to the window. Under the glowing sky Rome stretched out in its immensity, empurpled and gilded by the slanting sunrays. Across the horizon, far, far away, the trees of the Janiculum stretched a green girdle, of a limpid emerald hue, whilst the dome of St. Peter's, more to the left, showed palely blue, like a sapphire bedimmed by too bright a light. Then came the low town, the old ruddy city, baked as it were by centuries of burning summers, soft to the eye and beautiful with the deep life of the past, an unbounded chaos of roofs, gables, towers, *campanili*, and cupolas. But, in the foreground under the window, there was the new city — that which had been building for the last five and twenty years — huge blocks of masonry piled up side by side, still white with plaster, neither the sun nor history having as yet robed them in purple. And in particular the roofs of the colossal *Palazzo delle Finanze* had a disastrous effect, spreading out like far, bare steppes of cruel hideousness. And it was upon the desolation and abomination of all the newly erected piles that the eyes of the old soldier of conquest at last rested.

Silence ensued. Pierre felt the faint chill of hidden, unacknowledged sadness pass by, and courteously waited.

"I must beg your pardon for having interrupted you just now," resumed Orlando; "but it seems to

me that we cannot talk about your book to any good purpose until you have seen and studied Rome closely. You only arrived yesterday, did you not? Well, stroll about the city, look at things, question people, and I think that many of your ideas will change. I shall particularly like to know your impression of the Vatican since you have come here solely to see the Pope and defend your book against the Index. Why should we discuss things to-day, if facts themselves are calculated to bring you to other views, far more readily than the finest speeches which I might make? It is understood, you will come to see me again, and we shall then know what we are talking about, and, maybe, agree together."

"Why certainly, you are too kind," replied Pierre. "I only came to-day to express my gratitude to you for having read my book so attentively, and to pay homage to one of the glories of Italy."

Orlando was not listening, but remained for a moment absorbed in thought, with his eyes still resting upon Rome. And overcome, despite himself, by secret disquietude, he resumed in a low voice as though making an involuntary confession: "We have gone too fast, no doubt. There were expenses of undeniable utility—the roads, ports, and railways. And it was necessary to arm the country also; I did not at first disapprove of the heavy military burden. But since then how crushing has been the war budget—a war which has never come, and the long wait for which has ruined us. Ah! I have always been the friend of France. I only reproach her with one thing, that she has failed to understand the position in which

we were placed, the vital reasons which compelled us to ally ourselves with Germany. And then there are the thousand millions of *lire*¹ swallowed up in Rome! That was the real madness; pride and enthusiasm led us astray. Old and solitary as I've been for many years now, given to deep reflection, I was one of the first to divine the pitfall, the frightful financial crisis, the deficit which would bring about the collapse of the nation. I shouted it from the housetops, to my son, to all who came near me; but what was the use? They didn't listen; they were mad, still buying and selling and building, with no thought but for gambling booms and bubbles. But you'll see, you'll see. And the worst is that we are not situated as you are; we haven't a reserve of men and money in a dense peasant population, whose thrifty savings are always at hand to fill up the gaps caused by big catastrophes. There is no social rise among our people as yet; fresh men don't spring up out of the lower classes to reinvigorate the national blood, as they constantly do in your country. And, besides, the people are poor; they have no stockings to empty. The misery is frightful, I must admit it. Those who have any money prefer to spend it in the towns in a petty way rather than to risk it in agricultural or manufacturing enterprise. Factories are but slowly built, and the land is almost everywhere tilled in the same primitive manner as it was two thousand years ago. And then, too, take Rome—Rome, which didn't make Italy, but which Italy made its capital to satisfy an ardent, overpowering desire—Rome, which is still but a

¹ 40,000,000*l.*

splendid bit of scenery, picturing the glory of the centuries, and which, apart from its historical splendour, has only given us its degenerate papal population, swollen with ignorance and pride! Ah! I loved Rome too well, and I still love it too well to regret being now within its walls. But, good heavens! what insanity its acquisition brought us, what piles of money it has cost us, and how heavily and triumphantly it weighs us down! Look! look!"

He waved his hand as he spoke towards the livid roofs of the Palazzo delle Finanze, that vast and desolate steppe, as though he could see the harvest of glory all stripped off and bankruptcy appear with its fearful, threatening bareness. Restrained tears were dimming his eyes, and he looked superbly pitiful with his expression of baffled hope and grievous disquietude, with his huge white head, the muzzle of an old blanché lion henceforth powerless and caged in that bare, bright room, whose poverty-stricken aspect was instinct with so much pride that it seemed, as it were, a protest against the monumental splendour of the whole surrounding district! So those were the purposes to which the conquest had been put! And to think that he was impotent, henceforth unable to give his blood and his soul as he had done in the days gone by.

"Yes, yes," he exclaimed in a final outburst; "one gave everything, heart and brain, one's whole life indeed, so long as it was a question of making the country one and independent. But, now that the country is ours, just try to stir up enthusiasm for the reorganisation of its finances! There's no ideal-

ity in that! And this explains why, whilst the old ones are dying off, not a new man comes to the front among the young ones —”

All at once he stopped, looking somewhat embarrassed, yet smiling at his feverishness. “Excuse me,” he said, “I’m off again, I’m incorrigible. But it’s understood, we’ll leave that subject alone, and you’ll come back here, and we’ll chat together when you’ve seen everything.”

From that moment he showed himself extremely pleasant, and it was apparent to Pierre that he regretted having said so much, by the seductive affability and growing affection which he now displayed. He begged the young priest to prolong his sojourn, to abstain from all hasty judgments on Rome, and to rest convinced that, at bottom, Italy still loved France. And he was also very desirous that France should love Italy, and displayed genuine anxiety at the thought that perhaps she loved her no more. As at the Boccanera mansion, on the previous evening, Pierre realised that an attempt was being made to persuade him to admiration and affection. Like a susceptible woman with secret misgivings respecting the attractive power of her beauty, Italy was all anxiety with regard to the opinion of her visitors, and strove to win and retain their love.

However, Orlando again became impassioned when he learnt that Pierre was staying at the Boccanera mansion, and he made a gesture of extreme annoyance on hearing, at that very moment, a knock at the outer door. “Come in!” he called; but at the same time he detained Pierre, saying, “No, no, don’t go yet; I wish to know —”

But a lady came in — a woman of over forty, short and extremely plump, and still attractive with her small features and pretty smile swamped in fat. She was a blonde, with green, limpid eyes; and, fairly well dressed in a sober, nicely fitting mignonette gown, she looked at once pleasant, modest, and shrewd.

“Ah! it’s you, Stefana,” said the old man, letting her kiss him.

“Yes, uncle, I was passing by and came up to see how you were getting on.”

The visitor was the Signora Sacco, niece of Prada and a Neapolitan by birth, her mother having quitted Milan to marry a certain Pagani, a Neapolitan banker, who had afterwards failed. Subsequent to that disaster Stefana had married Sacco, then merely a petty post-office clerk. He, later on, wishing to revive his father-in-law’s business, had launched into all sorts of terrible, complicated, suspicious affairs, which by unforeseen luck had ended in his election as a deputy. Since he had arrived in Rome, to conquer the city in his turn, his wife had been compelled to assist his devouring ambition by dressing well and opening a *salon*; and, although she was still a little awkward, she rendered him many real services, being very economical and prudent, a thorough good housewife, with all the sterling, substantial qualities of Northern Italy which she had inherited from her mother, and which showed conspicuously beside the turbulence and carelessness of her husband, in whom flared Southern Italy with its perpetual, rageful appetite.

Despite his contempt for Sacco, old Orlando had

retained some affection for his niece, in whose veins flowed blood similar to his own. He thanked her for her kind inquiries, and then at once spoke of an announcement which he had read in the morning papers, for he suspected that the deputy had sent his wife to ascertain his opinion.

“Well, and that ministry?” he asked.

The Signora had seated herself and made no haste to reply, but glanced at the newspapers strewn over the table. “Oh! nothing is settled yet,” she at last responded; “the newspapers spoke out too soon. The Prime Minister sent for Sacco, and they had a talk together. But Sacco hesitates a good deal; he fears that he has no aptitude for the Department of Agriculture. Ah! if it were only the Finances—However, in any case, he would not have come to a decision without consulting you. What do you think of it, uncle?”

He interrupted her with a violent wave of the hand: “No, no, I won’t mix myself up in such matters!”

To him the rapid success of that adventurer Sacco, that schemer and gambler who had always fished in troubled waters, was an abomination, the beginning of the end. His son Luigi certainly distressed him; but it was even worse to think that—whilst Luigi, with his great intelligence and many remaining fine qualities, was nothing at all—Sacco, on the other hand, Sacco, blunderhead and ever-famished battener that he was, had not merely slipped into parliament, but was now, it seemed, on the point of securing office! A little, swarthy, dry man he was, with big, round eyes, projecting cheekbones, and prominent

chin. Ever dancing and chattering, he was gifted with a showy eloquence, all the force of which lay in his voice—a voice which at will became admirably powerful or gentle! And withal an insinuating man, profiting by every opportunity, wheedling and commanding by turn.

“You hear, Stefana,” said Orlando; “tell your husband that the only advice I have to give him is to return to his clerkship at the post-office, where perhaps he may be of use.”

What particularly filled the old soldier with indignation and despair was that such a man, a Sacco, should have fallen like a bandit on Rome—on that Rome whose conquest had cost so many noble efforts. And in his turn Sacco was conquering the city, was carrying it off from those who had won it by such hard toil, and was simply using it to satisfy his wild passion for power and its attendant enjoyments. Beneath his wheedling air there was the determination to devour everything. After the victory, while the spoil lay there, still warm, the wolves had come. It was the North that had made Italy, whereas the South, eager for the quarry, simply rushed upon the country, preyed upon it. And beneath the anger of the old stricken hero of Italian unity there was indeed all the growing antagonism of the North towards the South—the North industrious, economical, shrewd in politics, enlightened, full of all the great modern ideas, and the South ignorant and idle, bent on enjoying life immediately, amidst childish disorder in action, and an empty show of fine sonorous words.

Stefana had begun to smile in a placid way while glancing at Pierre, who had approached the window. "Oh, you say that, uncle," she responded; "but you love us well all the same, and more than once you have given me myself some good advice, for which I'm very thankful to you. For instance, there's that affair of Attilio's —"

She was alluding to her son, the lieutenant, and his love affair with Celia, the little Princess Buongiovanni, of which all the drawing-rooms, white and black alike, were talking.

"Attilio — that's another matter!" exclaimed Orlando. "He and you are both of the same blood as myself, and it's wonderful how I see myself again in that fine fellow. Yes, he is just the same as I was at his age. good-looking and brave and enthusiastic! I'm paying myself compliments, you see. But, really now, Attilio warms my heart, for he is the future, and brings me back some hope. Well, and what about his affair?"

"Oh! it gives us a lot of worry, uncle. I spoke to you about it before, but you shrugged your shoulders, saying that in matters of that kind all that the parents had to do was to let the lovers settle their affairs between them. Still, we don't want everybody to repeat that we are urging our son to get the little princess to elope with him, so that he may afterwards marry her money and title."

At this Orlando indulged in a frank outburst of gaiety: "That's a fine scruple! Was it your husband who instructed you to tell me of it? I know, however, that he affects some delicacy in this matter.

For my own part, I believe myself to be as honest as he is, and I can only repeat that, if I had a son like yours, so straightforward and good, and candidly loving, I should let him marry whomsoever he pleased in his own way. The Buongiovannis — good heavens! the Buongiovannis — why, despite all their rank and lineage and the money they still possess, it will be a great honour for them to have a handsome young man with a noble heart as their son-in-law!”

Again did Stefana assume an expression of placid satisfaction. She had certainly only come there for approval. “Very well, uncle,” she replied, “I’ll repeat that to my husband, and he will pay great attention to it; for if you are severe towards him he holds you in perfect veneration. And as for that ministry — well, perhaps nothing will be done, Sacco will decide according to circumstances.”

She rose and took her leave, kissing the old soldier very affectionately as on her arrival. And she complimented him on his good looks, declaring that she found him as handsome as ever, and making him smile by speaking of a lady who was still madly in love with him. Then, after acknowledging the young priest’s silent salutation by a slight bow, she went off, once more wearing her modest and sensible air.

For a moment Orlando, with his eyes turned towards the door, remained silent, again sad, reflecting no doubt on all the difficult, equivocal present, so different from the glorious past. But all at once he turned to Pierre, who was still waiting. “And so,

my friend," said he, "you are staying at the Palazzo Boccanera? Ah! what a grievous misfortune there has been on that side too!"

However, when the priest had told him of his conversation with Benedetta, and of her message that she still loved him and would never forget his goodness to her, no matter whatever happened, he appeared moved and his voice trembled: "Yes, she has a good heart, she has no spite. But what would you have? She did not love Luigi, and he was possibly violent. There is no mystery about the matter now, and I can speak to you freely, since to my great grief everybody knows what has happened."

Then Orlando abandoned himself to his recollections, and related how keen had been his delight on the eve of the marriage at the thought that so lovely a creature would become his daughter, and set some youth and charm around his invalid's arm-chair. He had always worshipped beauty, and would have had no other love than woman, if his country had not seized upon the best part of him. And Benedetta on her side loved him, revered him, constantly coming up to spend long hours with him, sharing his poor little room, which at those times became resplendent with all the divine grace that she brought with her. With her fresh breath near him, the pure scent she diffused, the caressing womanly tenderness with which she surrounded him, he lived anew. But, immediately afterwards, what a frightful drama and how his heart had bled at his inability to reconcile the husband and the wife! He could not possibly say that his son was in the wrong in desiring to be the loved

and accepted spouse. At first indeed he had hoped to soften Benedetta, and throw her into Luigi's arms. But when she had confessed herself to him in tears, owning her old love for Dario, and her horror of belonging to another, he realised that she would never yield. And a whole year had then gone by; he had lived for a whole year imprisoned in his arm-chair, with that poignant drama progressing beneath him in those luxurious rooms whence no sound even reached his ears. How many times had he not listened, striving to hear, fearing atrocious quarrels, in despair at his inability to prove still useful by creating happiness. He knew nothing by his son, who kept his own counsel; he only learnt a few particulars from Benedetta at intervals when emotion left her defenceless; and that marriage in which he had for a moment espied the much-needed alliance between old and new Rome, that unconsummated marriage filled him with despair, as if it were indeed the defeat of every hope, the final collapse of the dream which had filled his life. And he himself had ended by desiring the divorce, so unbearable had become the suffering caused by such a situation.

"Ah! my friend!" he said to Pierre; "never before did I so well understand the fatality of certain antagonism, the possibility of working one's own misfortune and that of others, even when one has the most loving heart and upright mind!"

But at that moment the door again opened, and this time, without knocking, Count Luigi Prada came in. And after rapidly bowing to the visitor, who had risen, he gently took hold of his father's

hands and felt them, as if fearing that they might be too warm or too cold.

"I've just arrived from Frascati, where I had to sleep," said he; "for the interruption of all that building gives me a lot of worry. And I'm told that you spent a bad night!"

"No, I assure you."

"Oh! I knew you wouldn't own it. But why will you persist in living up here without any comfort? All this isn't suited to your age. I should be so pleased if you would accept a more comfortable room where you might sleep better."

"No, no — I know that you love me well, my dear Luigi. But let me do as my old head tells me. That's the only way to make me happy."

Pierre was much struck by the ardent affection which sparkled in the eyes of the two men as they gazed at one another, face to face. This seemed to him very touching and beautiful, knowing as he did how many contrary ideas and actions, how many moral divergencies separated them. And he next took an interest in comparing them physically. Count Luigi Prada, shorter, more thick-set than his father, had, however, much the same strong energetic head, crowned with coarse black hair, and the same frank but somewhat stern eyes set in a face of clear complexion, barred by thick moustaches. But his mouth differed — a sensual, voracious mouth it was, with wolfish teeth — a mouth of prey made for nights of rapine, when the only question is to bite, and tear, and devour others. And for this reason, when some praised the frankness in his eyes, another would retort: "Yes,

but I don't like his mouth." His feet were large, his hands plump and over-broad, but admirably cared for.

And Pierre marvelled at finding him such as he had anticipated. He knew enough of his story to picture in him a hero's son spoilt by conquest, eagerly devouring the harvest garnered by his father's glorious sword. And he particularly studied how the father's virtues had deflected and become transformed into vices in the son — the most noble qualities being perverted, heroic and disinterested energy lapsing into a ferocious appetite for possession, the man of battle leading to the man of booty, since the great gusts of enthusiasm no longer swept by, since men no longer fought, since they remained there resting, pillaging, and devouring amidst the heaped-up spoils. And the pity of it was that the old hero, the paralytic, motionless father beheld it all — beheld the degeneration of his son, the speculator and company promoter gorged with millions!

However, Orlando introduced Pierre. "This is Monsieur l'Abbé Pierre Froment, whom I spoke to you about," he said, "the author of the book which I gave you to read."

Luigi Prada showed himself very amiable, at once talking of Rome with an intelligent passion like one who wished to make the city a great modern capital. He had seen Paris transformed by the Second Empire; he had seen Berlin enlarged and embellished after the German victories; and, according to him, if Rome did not follow the movement, if it did not become the inhabitable capital of a great people, it was threatened with prompt death: either a crumbling museum or a

renovated, resuscitated city — those were the alternatives.¹

Greatly struck, almost gained over already, Pierre listened to this clever man, charmed with his firm, clear mind. He knew how skilfully Prada had manœuvred in the affair of the Villa Montefiori, enriching himself when every one else was ruined, having doubtless foreseen the fatal catastrophe even while the gambling passion was maddening the entire nation. However, the young priest could already detect marks of weariness, precocious wrinkles and a fall of the lips, on that determined, energetic face, as though its possessor were growing tired of the continual struggle that he had to carry on amidst surrounding downfalls, the shock of which threatened to bring the most firmly established fortunes to the ground. It was said that Prada had recently had grave cause for anxiety; and indeed there was no longer any solidity to be found; everything might be swept away by the financial crisis which day by day was becoming more and more serious. In the case of Luigi, sturdy son though he was of Northern Italy, a sort of degeneration had set in, a slow rot, caused by the softening, perversive influence of Rome. He had there rushed upon the satisfaction of every appetite, and prolonged enjoyment was exhausting him. This, indeed, was one of the causes of the deep silent sadness of Or-

¹ Personally I should have thought the example of Berlin a great deterrent. The enlargement and embellishment of the Prussian capital, after the war of 1870, was attended by far greater roguery and wholesale swindling than even the previous transformation of Paris. Thousands of people too were ruined, and instead of an increase of prosperity the result was the very reverse. — *Trans.*

lando, who was compelled to witness the swift deterioration of his conquering race, whilst Sacco, the Italian of the South—served as it were by the climate, accustomed to the voluptuous atmosphere, the life of those sun-baked cities compounded of the dust of antiquity—bloomed there like the natural vegetation of a soil saturated with the crimes of history, and gradually grasped everything, both wealth and power.

As Orlando spoke of Stefana's visit to his son, Sacco's name was mentioned. Then, without another word, the two men exchanged a smile. A rumour was current that the Minister of Agriculture, lately deceased, would perhaps not be replaced immediately, and that another minister would take charge of the department pending the next session of the Chamber.

Next the Palazzo Boccanera was mentioned, and Pierre, his interest awakened, became more attentive. "Ah!" exclaimed Count Luigi, turning to him, "so you are staying in the Via Giulia? All the Rome of olden time sleeps there in the silence of forgetfulness."

With perfect ease he went on to speak of the Cardinal and even of Benedetta—"the Countess," as he called her. But, although he was careful to let no sign of anger escape him, the young priest could divine that he was secretly quivering, full of suffering and spite. In him the enthusiastic energy of his father appeared in a baser, degenerate form. Quitting the yet handsome Princess Flavia in his passion for Benedetta, her divinely beautiful niece, he had resolved to make the latter his own at any cost; determined to marry her, to struggle with her and

overcome her, although he knew that she loved him not, and that he would almost certainly wreck his entire life. Rather than relinquish her, however, he would have set Rome on fire. And thus his hopeless suffering was now great indeed: this woman was but his wife in name, and so torturing was the thought of her disdain, that at times, however calm his outward demeanour, he was consumed by a jealous vindictive sensual madness that did not even recoil from the idea of crime.

"Monsieur l'Abbé is acquainted with the situation," sadly murmured old Orlando.

His son responded by a wave of the hand, as though to say that everybody was acquainted with it. "Ah! father," he added, "but for you I should never have consented to take part in those proceedings for annulling the marriage! The Countess would have found herself compelled to return here, and would not nowadays be deriding us with her lover, that cousin of hers, Dario!"

At this Orlando also waved his hand, as if in protest.

"Oh! it's a fact, father," continued Luigi. "Why did she flee from here if it wasn't to go and live with her lover? And indeed, in my opinion, it's scandalous that a Cardinal's palace should shelter such goings-on!"

This was the report which he spread abroad, the accusation which he everywhere levelled against his wife, of publicly carrying on a shameless *liaison*. In reality, however, he did not believe a word of it, being too well acquainted with Benedetta's firm rectitude,

and her determination to belong to none but the man she loved, and to him only in marriage. However, in Prada's eyes such accusations were not only fair play but also very efficacious.

And now, although he turned pale with covert exasperation, and laughed a hard, vindictive, cruel laugh, he went on to speak in a bantering tone of the proceedings for annulling the marriage, and in particular of the plea put forward by Benedetta's advocate Morano. And at last his language became so free that Orlando, with a glance towards the priest, gently interposed: "Luigi! Luigi!"

"Yes, you are right, father, I'll say no more," thereupon added the young Count. "But it's really abominable and ridiculous. Lisbeth, you know, is highly amused at it."

Orlando again looked displeased, for when visitors were present he did not like his son to refer to the person whom he had just named. Lisbeth Kauffmann, very *blonde* and pink and merry, was barely thirty years of age, and belonged to the Roman foreign colony. For two years past she had been a widow, her husband having died at Rome whither he had come to nurse a complaint of the lungs. Thenceforward free, and sufficiently well off, she had remained in the city by taste, having a marked predilection for art, and painting a little, herself. In the Via Principe Amadeo, in the new Viminal district, she had purchased a little palazzo, and transformed a large apartment on its second floor into a studio hung with old stuffs, and balmy in every season with the scent of flowers. The place was well known to tolerant and

intellectual society. Lisbeth was there found in perpetual jubilation, clad in a long blouse, somewhat of a *gamine* in her ways, trenchant too and often bold of speech, but nevertheless capital company, and as yet compromised with nobody but Prada. Their *liaison* had begun some four months after his wife had left him, and now Lisbeth was near the time of becoming a mother. This she in no wise concealed, but displayed such candid tranquillity and happiness that her numerous acquaintances continued to visit her as if there were nothing in question, so facile and free indeed is the life of the great cosmopolitan continental cities. Under the circumstances which his wife's suit had created, Prada himself was not displeased at the turn which events had taken with regard to Lisbeth, but none the less his incurable wound still bled. There could be no compensation for the bitterness of Benedetta's disdain, it was she for whom his heart burned, and he dreamt of one day wreaking on her a tragic punishment.

Pierre, knowing nothing of Lisbeth, failed to understand the allusions of Orlando and his son. But realising that there was some embarrassment between them, he sought to take countenance by picking from off the littered table a thick book which, to his surprise, he found to be a French educational work, one of those manuals for the *baccalauréat*,¹ containing a digest of the knowledge which the official programmes

¹ The examination for the degree of bachelor, which degree is the necessary passport to all the liberal professions in France. M. Zola, by the way, failed to secure it, being ploughed for "insufficiency in literature"! — *Trans.*

require. It was but a humble, practical, elementary work, yet it necessarily dealt with all the mathematical, physical, chemical, and natural sciences, thus broadly outlining the intellectual conquests of the century, the present phase of human knowledge.

“Ah!” exclaimed Orlando, well pleased with the diversion, “you are looking at the book of my old friend Théophile Morin. He was one of the thousand of Marsala, you know, and helped us to conquer Sicily and Naples. A hero! But for more than thirty years now he has been living in France again, absorbed in the duties of his petty professorship, which hasn’t made him at all rich. And so he lately published that book, which sells very well in France it seems; and it occurred to him that he might increase his modest profits on it by issuing translations, an Italian one among others. He and I have remained brothers, and thinking that my influence would prove decisive, he wishes to utilise it. But he is mistaken; I fear, alas! that I shall be unable to get anybody to take up his book.”

At this Luigi Prada, who had again become very composed and amiable, shrugged his shoulders slightly, full as he was of the scepticism of his generation which desired to maintain things in their actual state so as to derive the greatest profit from them. “What would be the good of it?” he murmured; “there are too many books already!”

“No, no!” the old man passionately retorted, “there can never be too many books! We still and ever require fresh ones! It’s by literature, not by the sword, that mankind will overcome falsehood and

injustice and attain to the final peace of fraternity among the nations — Oh! you may smile ; I know that you call these ideas my fancies of '48, the fancies of a greybeard, as people say in France. But it is none the less true that Italy is doomed, if the problem be not attacked from down below, if the people be not properly fashioned. And there is only one way to make a nation, to create men, and that is to educate them, to develop by educational means the immense lost force which now stagnates in ignorance and idleness. Yes, yes, Italy is made, but let us make an Italian nation. And give us more and more books, and let us ever go more and more forward into science and into light, if we wish to live and to be healthy, good, and strong!”

With his torso erect, with his powerful leonine muzzle flaming with the white brightness of his beard and hair, old Orlando looked superb. And in that simple, candid chamber, so touching with its intentional poverty, he raised his cry of hope with such intensity of feverish faith, that before the young priest's eyes there arose another figure — that of Cardinal Boccanera, erect and black save for his snow-white hair, and likewise glowing with heroic beauty in his crumbling palace whose gilded ceilings threatened to fall about his head! Ah! the magnificent stubborn men of the past, the believers, the old men who still show themselves more virile, more ardent than the young! Those two represented the opposite poles of belief; they had not an idea, an affection in common, and in that ancient city of Rome, where all was being blown away in dust, they alone seemed

to protest, indestructible, face to face like two parted brothers, standing motionless on either horizon. And to have seen them thus, one after the other, so great and grand, so lonely, so detached from ordinary life, was to fill one's day with a dream of eternity.

Luigi, however, had taken hold of the old man's hands to calm him by an affectionate filial clasp. "Yes, yes, you are right, father, always right, and I'm a fool to contradict you. Now, pray don't move about like that, for you are uncovering yourself, and your legs will get cold again."

So saying, he knelt down and very carefully arranged the wrapper; and then remaining on the floor like a child, albeit he was two and forty, he raised his moist eyes, full of mute, entreating worship towards the old man who, calmed and deeply moved, caressed his hair with a trembling touch.

Pierre had been there for nearly two hours, when he at last took leave, greatly struck and affected by all that he had seen and heard. And again he had to promise that he would return and have a long chat with Orlando. Once out of doors he walked along at random. It was barely four o'clock, and it was his idea to ramble in this wise, without any predetermined programme, through Rome at that delightful hour when the sun sinks in the refreshed and far blue atmosphere. Almost immediately, however, he found himself in the Via Nazionale, along which he had driven on arriving the previous day. And he recognised the huge livid Banca d'Italia, the green gardens climbing to the Quirinal, and the heaven-soaring pines of the Villa Aldobrandini. Then, at

the turn of the street, as he stopped short in order that he might again contemplate the column of Trajan which now rose up darkly from its low piazza, already full of twilight, he was surprised to see a victoria suddenly pull up, and a young man courteously beckon to him.

“Monsieur l’Abbé Froment! Monsieur l’Abbé Froment!”

It was young Prince Dario Boccanera, on his way to his daily drive along the Corso. He now virtually subsisted on the liberality of his uncle the Cardinal, and was almost always short of money. But, like all the Romans, he would, if necessary, have rather lived on bread and water than have forgone his carriage, horse, and coachman. An equipage, indeed, is the one indispensable luxury of Rome.

“If you will come with me, Monsieur l’Abbé Froment,” said the young Prince, “I will show you the most interesting part of our city.”

He doubtless desired to please Benedetta, by behaving amiably towards her *protégé*. Idle as he was, too, it seemed to him a pleasant occupation to initiate that young priest, who was said to be so intelligent, into what he deemed the inimitable side, the true florescence of Roman life.

Pierre was compelled to accept, although he would have preferred a solitary stroll. Yet he was interested in this young man, the last born of an exhausted race, who, while seemingly incapable of either thought or action, was none the less very seductive with his high-born pride and indolence. Far more a Roman than a patriot, Dario had never had the faintest incli-

nation to rally to the new order of things, being well content to live apart and do nothing; and passionate though he was, he indulged in no follies, being very practical and sensible at heart, as are all his fellow-citizens, despite their apparent impetuosity. As soon as his carriage, after crossing the Piazza di Venezia, entered the Corso, he gave rein to his childish vanity, his desire to shine, his passion for gay, happy life in the open under the lovely sky. All this, indeed, was clearly expressed in the simple gesture which he made whilst exclaiming: "The Corso!"

As on the previous day, Pierre was filled with astonishment. The long narrow street again stretched before him as far as the white dazzling Piazza del Popolo, the only difference being that the right-hand houses were now steeped in sunshine, whilst those on the left were black with shadow. What! was that the Corso then, that semi-obscure trench, close pressed by high and heavy house-fronts, that mean roadway where three vehicles could scarcely pass abreast, and which serried shops lined with gaudy displays? There was neither space, nor far horizon, nor refreshing greenery such as the fashionable drives of Paris could boast! Nothing but jostling, crowding, and stifling on the little footways under the narrow strip of sky. And although Dario named the pompous and historical palaces, Bonaparte, Doria, Odescalchi, Sciarra, and Chigi; although he pointed out the column of Marcus Aurelius on the Piazza Colonna, the most lively square of the whole city with its everlasting throng of lounging, gazing, chattering people; although, all the way

to the Piazza del Popolo, he never ceased calling attention to churches, houses, and side-streets, notably the Via dei Condotti, at the far end of which the Trinità de' Monti, all golden in the glory of the sinking sun, appeared above that famous flight of steps, the triumphal Scala di Spagna — Pierre still and ever retained the impression of disillusion which the narrow, airless thoroughfare had conveyed to him: the "palaces" looked to him like mournful hospitals or barracks, the Piazza Colonna suffered terribly from a lack of trees, and the Trinità de' Monti alone took his fancy by its distant radiance of fairyland.

But it was necessary to come back from the Piazza del Popolo to the Piazza di Venezia, then return to the former square, and come back yet again, following the entire Corso three and four times without wearying. The delighted Dario showed himself and looked about him, exchanging salutations. On either footway was a compact crowd of promenaders whose eyes roamed over the equipages and whose hands could have shaken those of the carriage folks. So great at last became the number of vehicles that both lines were absolutely unbroken, crowded to such a point that the coachmen could do no more than walk their horses. Perpetually going up and coming down the Corso, people scrutinised and jostled one another. It was open-air promiscuity, all Rome gathered together in the smallest possible space, the folks who knew one another and who met here as in a friendly drawing-room, and the folks belonging to adverse parties who did not speak together but who elbowed each other, and whose glances penetrated to each

other's soul. Then a revelation came to Pierre, and he suddenly understood the Corso, the ancient custom, the passion and glory of the city. Its pleasure lay precisely in the very narrowness of the street, in that forced elbowing which facilitated not only desired meetings but the satisfaction of curiosity, the display of vanity, and the garnering of endless tittle-tattle. All Roman society met here each day, displayed itself, spied on itself, offering itself in spectacle to its own eyes, with such an indispensable need of thus beholding itself that the man of birth who missed the Corso was like one out of his element, destitute of newspapers, living like a savage. And withal the atmosphere was delightfully balmy, and the narrow strip of sky between the heavy, rusty mansions displayed an infinite azure purity.

Dario never ceased smiling, and slightly inclining his head while he repeated to Pierre the names of princes and princesses, dukes and duchesses — high-sounding names whose flourish had filled history, whose sonorous syllables conjured up the shock of armour on the battlefield and the splendour of papal pomp with robes of purple, tiaras of gold, and sacred vestments sparkling with precious stones. And as Pierre listened and looked he was pained to see merely some corpulent ladies or undersized gentlemen, bloated or shrunken beings, whose ill-looks seemed to be increased by their modern attire. However, a few pretty women went by, particularly some young, silent girls with large, clear eyes. And just as Dario had pointed out the Palazzo Buongiovanni, a huge seventeenth-century façade, with windows

encompassed by foliated ornamentation deplorably heavy in style, he added gaily:

"Ah! look — that's Attilio there on the footway. Young Lieutenant Sacco — you know, don't you?"

Pierre signed that he understood. Standing there in uniform, Attilio, so young, so energetic and brave of appearance, with a frank countenance softly illumined by blue eyes like his mother's, at once pleased the priest. He seemed indeed the very personification of youth and love, with all their enthusiastic, disinterested hope in the future.

"You'll see by and by, when we pass the palace again," said Dario. "He'll still be there and I'll show you something."

Then he began to talk gaily of the girls of Rome, the little princesses, the little duchesses, so discreetly educated at the convent of the Sacred Heart, quitting it for the most part so ignorant and then completing their education beside their mothers, never going out but to accompany the latter on the obligatory drive to the Corso, and living through endless days, cloistered, imprisoned in the depths of sombre mansions. Nevertheless what tempests raged in those mute souls to which none had ever penetrated! what stealthy growth of will suddenly appeared from under passive obedience, apparent unconsciousness of surroundings! How many there were who stubbornly set their minds on carving out their lives for themselves, on choosing the man who might please them, and securing him despite the opposition of the entire world! And the lover was chosen there from among the stream of young men promenading the Corso, the lover hooked

with a glance during the daily drive, those candid eyes speaking aloud and sufficing for confession and the gift of all, whilst not a breath was wafted from the lips so chastely closed. And afterwards there came love letters, furtively exchanged in church, and the winning-over of maids to facilitate stolen meetings, at first so innocent. In the end, a marriage often resulted.

Celia, for her part, had determined to win Attilio on the very first day when their eyes had met. And it was from a window of the Palazzo Buongiovanni that she had perceived him one afternoon of mortal weariness. He had just raised his head, and she had taken him for ever and given herself to him with those large, pure eyes of hers as they rested on his own. She was but an *amorosa* — nothing more ; he pleased her ; she had set her heart on him — him and none other. She would have waited twenty years for him, but she relied on winning him at once by quiet stubbornness of will. People declared that the terrible fury of the Prince, her father, had proved impotent against her respectful, obstinate silence. He, man of mixed blood as he was, son of an American woman, and husband of an English woman, laboured but to retain his own name and fortune intact amidst the downfall of others ; and it was rumoured that as the result of a quarrel which he had picked with his wife, whom he accused of not sufficiently watching over their daughter, the Princess had revolted, full not only of the pride of a foreigner who had brought a huge dowry in marriage, but also of such plain, frank egotism that she had declared she no longer found

time enough to attend to herself, let alone another. Had she not already done enough in bearing him five children? She thought so; and now she spent her time in worshipping herself, letting Celia do as she listed, and taking no further interest in the household through which swept stormy gusts.

However, the carriage was again about to pass the Buongiovanni mansion, and Dario forewarned Pierre. "You see," said he, "Attilio has come back. And now look up at the third window on the first floor."

It was at once rapid and charming. Pierre saw the curtain slightly drawn aside and Celia's gentle face appear. Closed, candid lily, she did not smile, she did not move. Nothing could be read on those pure lips, or in those clear but fathomless eyes of hers. Yet she was taking Attilio to herself, and giving herself to him without reserve. And soon the curtain fell once more.

"Ah, the little mask!" muttered Dario. "Can one ever tell what there is behind so much innocence?"

As Pierre turned round he perceived Attilio, whose head was still raised, and whose face was also motionless and pale, with closed mouth, and widely opened eyes. And the young priest was deeply touched, for this was love, absolute love in its sudden omnipotence, true love, eternal and juvenescent, in which ambition and calculation played no part.

Then Dario ordered the coachman to drive up to the Pincio; for, before or after the Corso, the round of the Pincio is obligatory on fine, clear afternoons. First came the Piazza del Popolo, the most airy and regular square of Rome, with its conjunction of thorough-

fares, its churches and fountains, its central obelisk, and its two clumps of trees facing one another at either end of the small white paving-stones, betwixt the severe and sun-gilt buildings. Then, turning to the right, the carriage began to climb the inclined way to the Pincio—a magnificent winding ascent, decorated with bas-reliefs, statues, and fountains—a kind of apotheosis of marble, a commemoration of ancient Rome, rising amidst greenery. Up above, however, Pierre found the garden small, little better than a large square, with just the four necessary roadways to enable the carriages to drive round and round as long as they pleased. An uninterrupted line of busts of the great men of ancient and modern Italy fringed these roadways. But what Pierre most admired was the trees—trees of the most rare and varied kinds, chosen and tended with infinite care, and nearly always evergreens, so that in winter and summer alike the spot was adorned with lovely foliage of every imaginable shade of verdure. And beside these trees, along the fine, breezy roadways, Dario's victoria began to turn, following the continuous, unwearying stream of the other carriages.

Pierre remarked one young woman of modest demeanour and attractive simplicity who sat alone in a dark-blue victoria, drawn by a well-groomed, elegantly harnessed horse. She was very pretty, short, with chestnut hair, a creamy complexion, and large gentle eyes. Quietly robed in dead-leaf silk, she wore a large hat, which alone looked somewhat extravagant. And seeing that Dario was staring at her, the priest inquired her name, whereat the young Prince smiled.

Oh! she was nobody, La Tonietta was the name that people gave her; she was one of the few *demi-mondaines* that Roman society talked of. Then, with the freeness and frankness which his race displays in such matters, Dario added some particulars. La Tonietta's origin was obscure; some said that she was the daughter of an innkeeper of Tivoli, and others that of a Neapolitan banker. At all events, she was very intelligent, had educated herself, and knew thoroughly well how to receive and entertain people at the little palazzo in the Via dei Mille, which had been given to her by old Marquis Manfredi now deceased. She made no scandalous show, had but one protector at a time, and the princesses and duchesses who paid attention to her at the Corso every afternoon, considered her nice-looking. One peculiarity had made her somewhat notorious. There was some one whom she loved and from whom she never accepted aught but a bouquet of white roses; and folks would smile indulgently when at times for weeks together she was seen driving round the Pincio with those pure, white bridal flowers on the carriage seat.

Dario, however, suddenly paused in his explanations to address a ceremonious bow to a lady who, accompanied by a gentleman, drove by in a large landau. Then he simply said to the priest: "My mother."

Pierre already knew of her. Viscount de la Choue had told him her story, how, after Prince Onofrio Boccanera's death, she had married again, although she was already fifty; how at the Corso, just like some young girl, she had hooked with her eyes a handsome man to her liking — one, too, who was fif-

teen years her junior. And Pierre also knew who that man was, a certain Jules Laporte, an ex-sergeant of the papal Swiss Guard, an ex-traveller in relics, compromised in an extraordinary "false relic" fraud; and he was further aware that Laporte's wife had made a fine-looking Marquis Montefiori of him, the last of the fortunate adventurers of romance, triumphing as in the legendary lands where shepherds are wedded to queens.

At the next turn, as the large landau again went by, Pierre looked at the couple. The Marchioness was really wonderful, blooming with all the classical Roman beauty, tall, opulent, and very dark, with the head of a goddess and regular if somewhat massive features, nothing as yet betraying her age except the down upon her upper lip. And the Marquis, the Romanised Swiss of Geneva, really had a proud bearing, with his solid soldierly figure and long wavy moustaches. People said that he was in no wise a fool but, on the contrary, very gay and very supple, just the man to please women. His wife so gloried in him that she dragged him about and displayed him everywhere, having begun life afresh with him as if she were still but twenty, spending on him the little fortune which she had saved from the Villa Montefiori disaster, and so completely forgetting her son that she only saw the latter now and again at the promenade and acknowledged his bow like that of some chance acquaintance.

"Let us go to see the sun set behind St. Peter's," all at once said Dario, conscientiously playing his part as a showman of curiosities.

The victoria thereupon returned to the terrace, where a military band was now playing with a terrific blare of brass instruments. In order that their occupants might hear the music, a large number of carriages had already drawn up, and a growing crowd of loungers on foot had assembled there. And from that beautiful terrace, so broad and lofty, one of the most wonderful views of Rome was offered to the gaze. Beyond the Tiber, beyond the pale chaos of the new district of the castle meadows,¹ and between the greenery of Monte Mario and the Janiculum arose St. Peter's. Then on the left came all the olden city, an endless stretch of roofs, a rolling sea of edifices as far as the eye could reach. But one's glances always came back to St. Peter's, towering into the azure with pure and sovereign grandeur. And, seen from the terrace, the slow sunsets in the depths of the vast sky behind the colossus were sublime.

Sometimes there are topplings of sanguineous clouds, battles of giants hurling mountains at one another and succumbing beneath the monstrous ruins of flaming cities. Sometimes only red streaks or fissures appear on the surface of a sombre lake, as if a net of light has been flung to fish the submerged orb from amidst the seaweed. Sometimes, too, there is a rosy mist, a kind of delicate dust which falls, streaked with pearls by a distant shower, whose curtain is drawn across the mystery of the horizon. And sometimes there is a triumph, a cortège of gold and purple chariots of cloud rolling along a highway of fire, galleys floating upon an azure sea, fantastic and extravagant

¹ See *ante*, p. 98, note.

pomps slowly sinking into the less and less fathomable abyss of the twilight.

But that night the sublime spectacle presented itself to Pierre with a calm, blinding, desperate grandeur. At first, just above the dome of St. Peter's, the sun, descending in a spotless, deeply limpid sky, proved yet so resplendent that one's eyes could not face its brightness. And in this resplendency the dome seemed to be incandescent, you would have said a dome of liquid silver; whilst the surrounding districts, the house-roofs of the Borgo, were as though changed into a lake of live embers. Then, as the sun was by degrees inclined, it lost some of its blaze, and one could look; and soon afterwards sinking with majestic slowness it disappeared behind the dome, which showed forth darkly blue, while the orb, now entirely hidden, set an aureola around it, a glory like a crown of flaming rays. And then began the dream, the dazzling symbol, the singular illumination of the row of windows beneath the cupola which were transpierced by the light and looked like the ruddy mouths of furnaces, in such wise that one might have imagined the dome to be poised upon a brazier, isolated, in the air, as though raised and upheld by the violence of the fire. It all lasted barely three minutes. Down below the jumbled roofs of the Borgo became steeped in violet vapour, sank into increasing gloom, whilst from the Janiculum to Monte Mario the horizon showed its firm black line. And it was the sky then which became all purple and gold, displaying the infinite placidity of a supernatural radiance above the earth which faded into nihility. Finally the last window reflections were extinguished,

the glow of the heavens departed, and nothing remained but the vague, fading roundness of the dome of St. Peter's amidst the all-invading night.

And, by some subtle connection of ideas, Pierre at that moment once again saw rising before him the lofty, sad, declining figures of Cardinal Boccanera and old Orlando. On the evening of that day when he had learnt to know them, one after the other, both so great in the obstinacy of their hope, they seemed to be there, erect on the horizon above their annihilated city, on the fringe of the heavens which death apparently was about to seize. Was everything then to crumble with them? was everything to fade away and disappear in the falling night following upon accomplished Time?

V

ON the following day Narcisse Habert came in great worry to tell Pierre that Monsignor Gamba del Zoppo complained of being unwell, and asked for a delay of two or three days before receiving the young priest and considering the matter of his audience. Pierre was thus reduced to inaction, for he dared not make any attempt elsewhere in view of seeing the Pope. He had been so frightened by Nani and others that he feared he might jeopardise everything by inconsiderate endeavours. And so he began to visit Rome in order to occupy his leisure.

His first visit was for the ruins of the Palatine. Going out alone one clear morning at eight o'clock, he presented himself at the entrance in the Via San Teodoro, an iron gateway flanked by the lodges of the keepers. One of the latter at once offered his services, and though Pierre would have preferred to roam at will, following the bent of his dream, he somehow did not like to refuse the offer of this man, who spoke French very distinctly, and smiled in a very good-natured way. He was a squatly built little man, a former soldier, some sixty years of age, and his square-cut, ruddy face was barred by thick white moustaches.

"Then will you please follow me, Monsieur l'Abbé,"

said he. "I can see that you are French, Monsieur l'Abbé. I'm a Piedmontese myself, but I know the French well enough; I was with them at Solferino. Yes, yes, whatever people may say, one can't forget old friendships. Here, this way, please, to the right."

Raising his eyes, Pierre had just perceived the line of cypresses edging the plateau of the Palatine on the side of the Tiber; and in the delicate blue atmosphere the intense greenery of these trees showed like a black fringe. They alone attracted the eye; the slope, of a dusty, dirty grey, stretched out bare and devastated, dotted by a few bushes, among which peeped fragments of ancient walls. All was instinct with the ravaged, leprous sadness of a spot handed over to excavation, and where only men of learning could wax enthusiastic.

"The palaces of Tiberius, Caligula, and the Flavians are up above," resumed the guide. "We must keep them for the end and go round." Nevertheless he took a few steps to the left, and pausing before an excavation, a sort of grotto in the hillside, exclaimed: "This is the Lupercal den where the wolf suckled Romulus and Remus. Just here at the entry used to stand the Ruminal fig-tree which sheltered the twins."

Pierre could not restrain a smile, so convinced was the tone in which the old soldier gave these explanations, proud as he was of all the ancient glory, and wont to regard the wildest legends as indisputable facts. However, when the worthy man pointed out some vestiges of Roma Quadrata—remnants of walls which really seemed to date from the foundation of

the city — Pierre began to feel interested, and a first touch of emotion made his heart beat. This emotion was certainly not due to any beauty of scene, for he merely beheld a few courses of tufa blocks, placed one upon the other and uncemented. But a past which had been dead for seven and twenty centuries seemed to rise up before him, and those crumbling, blackened blocks, the foundation of such a mighty eclipse of power and splendour, acquired extraordinary majesty.

Continuing their inspection, they went on, skirting the hillside. The outbuildings of the palaces must have descended to this point; fragments of porticoes, fallen beams, columns and friezes set up afresh, edged the rugged path which wound through wild weeds, suggesting a neglected cemetery; and the guide repeated the words which he had used day by day for ten years past, continuing to enunciate suppositions as facts, and giving a name, a destination, a history, to every one of the fragments.

"The house of Augustus," he said at last, pointing towards some masses of earth and rubbish.

Thereupon Pierre, unable to distinguish anything, ventured to inquire: "Where do you mean?"

"Oh!" said the man, "it seems that the walls were still to be seen at the end of the last century. But it was entered from the other side, from the Sacred Way. On this side there was a huge balcony which overlooked the Circus Maximus so that one could view the sports. However, as you can see, the greater part of the palace is still buried under that big garden up above, the garden of the Villa Mills. When there's money for fresh excavations it will be found again,

together with the temple of Apollo and the shrine of Vesta which accompanied it."

Turning to the left, he next entered the Stadium, the arena erected for foot-racing, which stretched beside the palace of Augustus; and the priest's interest was now once more awakened. It was not that he found himself in presence of well-preserved and monumental remains, for not a column had remained erect, and only the right-hand walls were still standing. But the entire plan of the building had been traced, with the goals at either end, the porticus round the course, and the colossal imperial tribune which, after being on the left, annexed to the house of Augustus, had afterwards opened on the right, fitting into the palace of Septimius Severus. And while Pierre looked on all the scattered remnants, his guide went on chattering, furnishing the most copious and precise information, and declaring that the gentlemen who directed the excavations had mentally reconstructed the Stadium in each and every particular, and were even preparing a most exact plan of it, showing all the columns in their proper order and the statues in their niches, and even specifying the divers sorts of marble which had covered the walls.

"Oh! the directors are quite at ease," the old soldier eventually added with an air of infinite satisfaction. "There will be nothing for the Germans to pounce on here. They won't be allowed to set things topsy-turvy as they did at the Forum, where everybody's at sea since they came along with their wonderful science!"

Pierre — a Frenchman — smiled, and his interest

increased when, by broken steps and wooden bridges thrown over gaps, he followed the guide into the great ruins of the palace of Severus. Rising on the southern point of the Palatine, this palace had overlooked the Appian Way and the Campagna as far as the eye could reach. Nowadays, almost the only remains are the substructures, the subterranean halls contrived under the arches of the terraces, by which the plateau of the hill was enlarged; and yet these dismantled substructures suffice to give some idea of the triumphant palace which they once upheld, so huge and powerful have they remained in their indestructible massiveness. Near by arose the famous Septizonium, the tower with the seven tiers of arcades, which only finally disappeared in the sixteenth century. One of the palace terraces yet juts out upon cyclopean arches and from it the view is splendid. But all the rest is a commingling of massive yet crumbling walls, gaping depths whose ceilings have fallen, endless corridors and vast halls of doubtful destination. Well cared for by the new administration, swept and cleansed of weeds, the ruins have lost their romantic wildness and assumed an aspect of bare and mournful grandeur. However, flashes of living sunlight often gild the ancient walls, penetrate by their breaches into the black halls, and animate with their dazzlement the mute melancholy of all this dead splendour now exhumed from the earth in which it slumbered for centuries. Over the old ruddy masonry, stripped of its pompous marble covering, is the purple mantle of the sunlight, draping the whole with imperial glory once more.

For more than two hours already Pierre had been walking on, and yet he still had to visit all the earlier palaces on the north and east of the plateau. "We must go back," said the guide, "the gardens of the Villa Mills and the convent of San Bonaventura stop the way. We shall only be able to pass on this side when the excavations have made a clearance. Ah! Monsieur l'Abbé, if you had walked over the Palatine merely some fifty years ago! I've seen some plans of that time. There were only some vineyards and little gardens with hedges then, a real campagna, where not a soul was to be met. And to think that all these palaces were sleeping underneath!"

Pierre followed him, and after again passing the house of Augustus, they ascended the slope and reached the vast Flavian palace,¹ still half buried by the neighbouring villa, and composed of a great number of halls large and small, on the nature of which scholars are still arguing. The aula regia, or throne-room, the basilica, or hall of justice, the triclinium, or dining-room, and the peristylum seem certainties; but for all the rest, and especially the small chambers of the private part of the structure, only more or less fanciful conjectures can be offered. Moreover, not a wall is entire; merely foundations peep out of the ground, mutilated bases describing the plan of the edifice. The only ruin preserved, as if by miracle, is the house on a lower level which some assert to have been that of Livia,² a house which seems very

¹ Begun by Vespasian and finished by Domitian. — *Trans.*

² Others assert it to have been the house of Germanicus, father of Caligula. — *Trans.*

small beside all the huge palaces, and where are three halls comparatively intact, with mural paintings of mythological scenes, flowers, and fruits, still wonderfully fresh. As for the palace of Tiberius, not one of its stones can be seen; its remains lie buried beneath a lovely public garden; whilst of the neighbouring palace of Caligula, overhanging the Forum, there are only some huge substructures, akin to those of the house of Severus — buttresses, lofty arcades, which upheld the palace, vast basements, so to say, where the prætorians were posted and gorged themselves with continual junketings. And thus this lofty plateau dominating the city merely offered some scarcely recognisable vestiges to the view, stretches of grey, bare soil turned up by the pick, and dotted with fragments of old walls; and it needed a real effort of scholarly imagination to conjure up the ancient imperial splendour which once had triumphed there.

Nevertheless Pierre's guide, with quiet conviction, persisted in his explanations, pointing to empty space as though the edifices still rose before him. "Here," said he, "we are in the Area Palatina. Yonder, you see, is the façade of Domitian's palace, and there you have that of Caligula's palace, while on turning round the temple of Jupiter Stator is in front of you. The Sacred Way came up as far as here, and passed under the Porta Mugonia, one of the three gates of primitive Rome."

He paused and pointed to the northwest portion of the height. "You will have noticed," he resumed, "that the Cæsars didn't build yonder. And that was evidently because they had to respect some very

ancient monuments dating from before the foundation of the city and greatly venerated by the people. There stood the temple of Victory built by Evander and his Arcadians, the Lupercal grotto which I showed you, and the humble hut of Romulus constructed of reeds and clay. Oh! everything has been found again, Monsieur l'Abbé; and, in spite of all that the Germans say there isn't the slightest doubt of it."

Then, quite abruptly, like a man suddenly remembering the most interesting thing of all, he exclaimed: "Ah! to wind up we'll just go to see the subterranean gallery where Caligula was murdered."

Thereupon they descended into a long cryptoporticus, through the breaches of which the sun now casts bright rays. Some ornaments of stucco and fragments of mosaic-work are yet to be seen. Still the spot remains mournful and desolate, well fitted for tragic horror. The old soldier's voice had become graver as he related how Caligula, on returning from the Palatine games, had been minded to descend all alone into this gallery to witness certain sacred dances which some youths from Asia were practising there. And then it was that the gloom gave Cassius Chæreas, the chief of the conspirators, an opportunity to deal him the first thrust in the abdomen. Howling with pain, the emperor sought to flee; but the assassins, his creatures, his dearest friends, rushed upon him, threw him down, and dealt him blow after blow, whilst he, mad with rage and fright, filled the dim, deaf gallery with the howling of a slaughtered beast. When he had expired, silence fell once more, and the frightened murderers fled.

The classical visit to the Palatine was now over, and when Pierre came up into the light again, he wished to rid himself of his guide and remain alone in the pleasant, dreamy garden on the summit of the height. For three hours he had been tramping about with the guide's voice buzzing in his ears. The worthy man was now talking of his friendship for France and relating the battle of Magenta in great detail. He smiled as he took the piece of silver which Pierre offered him, and then started on the battle of Solferino. Indeed, it seemed impossible to stop him, when fortunately a lady came up to ask for some information. And, thereupon, he went off with her. "Good-evening, Monsieur l'Abbé," he said; "you can go down by way of Caligula's palace."

Delightful was Pierre's relief when he was at last able to rest for a moment on one of the marble seats in the garden. There were but few clumps of trees, cypresses, box-trees, palms, and some fine evergreen oaks; but the latter, sheltering the seat, cast a dark shade of exquisite freshness around. The charm of the spot was also largely due to its dreamy solitude, to the low rustle which seemed to come from that ancient soil saturated with resounding history. Here formerly had been the pleasure grounds of the Villa Farnese which still exists though greatly damaged, and the grace of the Renaissance seems to linger here, its breath passing caressingly through the shiny foliage of the old evergreen oaks. You are, as it were, enveloped by the soul of the past, an ethereal conglomeration of visions, and overhead is wafted the straying breath of innumerable generations buried beneath the sod.

After a time, however, Pierre could no longer remain seated, so powerful was the attraction of Rome, scattered all around that august summit. So he rose and approached the balustrade of a terrace; and beneath him appeared the Forum, and beyond it the Capitoline hill. To the eye the latter now only presented a commingling of grey buildings, lacking both grandeur and beauty. On the summit one saw the rear of the Palace of the Senator, flat, with little windows, and surmounted by a high, square campanile. The large, bare, rusty-looking walls hid the church of Santa Maria in Ara Coeli and the spot where the temple of Capitoline Jove had formerly stood, radiant in all its royalty. On the left, some ugly houses rose terrace-wise upon the slope of Monte Caprino, where goats were pastured in the middle ages; while the few fine trees in the grounds of the Caffarelli palace, the present German embassy, set some greenery above the ancient Tarpeian rock now scarcely to be found, lost, hidden as it is, by buttress walls. Yet this was the Mount of the Capitol, the most glorious of the seven hills, with its citadel and its temple, the temple to which universal dominion was promised, the St. Peter's of pagan Rome; this indeed was the hill — steep on the side of the Forum, and a precipice on that of the Campus Martius — where the thunder of Jupiter fell, where in the dimmest of the far-off ages the Asylum of Romulus rose with its sacred oaks, a spot of infinite savage mystery. Here, later, were preserved the public documents of Roman grandeur inscribed on tablets of brass; hither climbed the heroes of the trebly hundred triumphs;

and here the emperors became gods, erect in statues of marble. And nowadays the eye inquires wonderingly how so much history and so much glory can have had for their scene so small a space, such a rugged, jumbled pile of paltry buildings, a mole-hill, looking no bigger, no loftier than a hamlet perched between two valleys.

Then another surprise for Pierre was the Forum, starting from the Capitol and stretching out below the Palatine: a narrow square, close pressed by the neighbouring hills, a hollow where Rome in growing had been compelled to rear edifice close to edifice till all stifled for lack of breathing space. It was necessary to dig very deep — some fifty feet — to find the venerable republican soil, and now all you see is a long, clean, livid trench, cleared of ivy and bramble, where the fragments of paving, the bases of columns, and the piles of foundations appear like bits of bone. Level with the ground the Basilica Julia, entirely mapped out, looks like an architect's ground plan. On that side the arch of Septimius Severus alone rears itself aloft, virtually intact, whilst of the temple of Vespasian only a few isolated columns remain still standing, as if by miracle, amidst the general downfall, soaring with a proud elegance, with sovereign audacity of equilibrium, so slender and so gilded, into the blue heavens. The column of Phocas is also erect; and you see some portions of the Rostra fitted together out of fragments discovered near by. But if the eye seeks a sensation of extraordinary vastness, it must travel beyond the three columns of the temple of Castor and Pollux, beyond the vestiges of

the house of the Vestals, beyond the temple of Faustina, in which the Christian Church of San Lorenzo has so composedly installed itself, and even beyond the round temple of Romulus, to light upon the Basilica of Constantine with its three colossal, gaping archways. From the Palatine they look like porches built for a nation of giants, so massive that a fallen fragment resembles some huge rock hurled by a whirlwind from a mountain summit. And there, in that illustrious, narrow, overflowing Forum the history of the greatest of nations held for centuries, from the legendary time of the Sabine women, reconciling their relatives and their ravishers, to that of the proclamation of public liberty, so slowly wrung from the patricians by the plebeians. Was not the Forum at once the market, the exchange, the tribunal, the open-air hall of public meeting? The Gracchi there defended the cause of the humble; Sylla there set up the lists of those whom he proscribed; Cicero there spoke, and there, against the rostra, his bleeding head was hung. Then, under the emperors, the old renown was dimmed, the centuries buried the monuments and temples with such piles of dust that all that the middle ages could do was to turn the spot into a cattle market! Respect has come back once more, a respect which violates tombs, which is full of feverish curiosity and science, which is dissatisfied with mere hypotheses, which loses itself amidst this historical soil where generations rise one above the other, and hesitates between the fifteen or twenty restorations of the Forum that have been planned on paper, each of them as plausible as the other. But to the mere

passer-by, who is not a professional scholar and has not recently re-perused the history of Rome, the details have no significance. All he sees on this searched and scoured spot is a city's cemetery where old exhumed stones are whitening, and whence rises the intense sadness that envelops dead nations. Pierre, however, noting here and there fragments of the Sacred Way, now turning, now running down, and now ascending with their pavement of silex indented by the chariot-wheels, thought of the triumphs, of the ascent of the triumpher, so sorely shaken as his chariot jolted over that rough pavement of glory.

But the horizon expanded towards the southeast, and beyond the arches of Titus and Constantine he perceived the Colosseum. Ah! that colossus, only one-half or so of which has been destroyed by time as with the stroke of a mighty scythe, it rises in its enormity and majesty like a stone lace-work with hundreds of empty bays agape against the blue of heaven! There is a world of halls, stairs, landings, and passages, a world where one loses oneself amidst death-like silence and solitude. The furrowed tiers of seats, eaten into by the atmosphere, are like shapeless steps leading down into some old extinct crater, some natural circus excavated by the force of the elements in indestructible rock. The hot suns of eighteen hundred years have baked and scorched this ruin, which has reverted to a state of nature, bare and golden-brown like a mountain-side, since it has been stripped of its vegetation, the flora which once made it like a virgin forest. And what an evocation

when the mind sets flesh and blood and life again on all that dead osseous framework, fills the circus with the 90,000 spectators which it could hold, marshals the games and the combats of the arena, gathers a whole civilisation together, from the emperor and the dignitaries to the surging plebeian sea, all aglow with the agitation and brilliancy of an impassioned people, assembled under the ruddy reflection of the giant purple *velum*. And then, yet further, on the horizon, were other cyclopean ruins, the baths of Caracalla, standing there like relics of a race of giants long since vanished from the world: halls extravagantly and inexplicably spacious and lofty; vestibules large enough for an entire population; a *frigidarium* where five hundred people could swim together; a *tepidarium* and a *calidarium*¹ on the same proportions, born of a wild craving for the huge; and then the terrific massiveness of the structures, the thickness of the piles of brick-work, such as no feudal castle ever knew; and, in addition, the general immensity which makes passing visitors look like lost ants; such an extraordinary riot of the great and the mighty that one wonders for what men, for what multitudes, this monstrous edifice was reared. To-day, you would say a mass of rocks in the rough, thrown from some height for building the abode of Titans.

And as Pierre gazed, he became more and more immersed in the limitless past which encompassed him. On all sides history rose up like a surging sea. Those bluey plains on the north and west were ancient Etruria; those jagged crests on the east were the

¹ *Tepidarium*, warm bath; *calidarium*, vapour bath. — *Trans.*

Sabine Mountains; while southward, the Alban Mountains and Latium spread out in the streaming gold of the sunshine. Alba Longa was there, and so was Monte Cavo, with its crown of old trees, and the convent which has taken the place of the ancient temple of Jupiter. Then beyond the Forum, beyond the Capitol, the greater part of Rome stretched out, whilst behind Pierre, on the margin of the Tiber, was the Janiculum. And a voice seemed to come from the whole city, a voice which told him of Rome's eternal life, resplendent with past greatness. He remembered just enough of what he had been taught at school to realise where he was; he knew just what every one knows of Rome with no pretension to scholarship, and it was more particularly his artistic temperament which awoke within him and gathered warmth from the flame of memory. The present had disappeared, and the ocean of the past was still rising, buoying him up, carrying him away.

And then his mind involuntarily pictured a resurrection instinct with life. The grey, dismal Palatine, razed like some accursed city, suddenly became animated, peopled, crowned with palaces and temples. There had been the cradle of the Eternal City, founded by Romulus on that summit overlooking the Tiber. There assuredly the seven kings of its two and a half centuries of monarchical rule had dwelt, enclosed within high, strong walls, which had but three gateways. Then the five centuries of republican sway spread out, the greatest, the most glorious of all the centuries, those which brought the Italic peninsula and finally the known world under Roman dominion.

During those victorious years of social and war-like struggle, Rome grew and peopled the seven hills, and the Palatine became but a venerable cradle with legendary temples, and was even gradually invaded by private residences. But at last Cæsar, the incarnation of the power of his race, after Gaul and after Pharsalia triumphed in the name of the whole Roman people, having completed the colossal task by which the five following centuries of imperialism were to profit, with a pompous splendour and a rush of every appetite. And then Augustus could ascend to power; glory had reached its climax; millions of gold were waiting to be filched from the depths of the provinces; and the imperial gala was to begin in the world's capital, before the eyes of the dazzled and subjected nations. Augustus had been born on the Palatine, and after Actium had given him the empire, he set his pride in reigning from the summit of that sacred mount, venerated by the people. He bought up private houses and there built his palace with luxurious splendour: an atrium upheld by four pilasters and eight columns; a peristylum encompassed by fifty-six Ionic columns; private apartments all around, and all in marble; a profusion of marble, brought at great cost from foreign lands, and of the brightest hues, resplendent like gems. And he lodged himself with the gods, building near his own abode a large temple of Apollo and a shrine of Vesta in order to ensure himself divine and eternal sovereignty. And then the seed of the imperial palaces was sown; they were to spring up, grow and swarm, and cover the entire mount.

Ah! the all-powerfulness of Augustus, his four and forty years of total, absolute, superhuman power, such as no despot has known even in his dreams! He had taken to himself every title, united every magistracy in his person. Emperor and consul, he commanded the armies and exercised executive power; pro-consul, he was supreme in the provinces; perpetual censor and princeps, he reigned over the senate; tribune, he was the master of the people. And, formerly called Octavius, he had caused himself to be declared Augustus, sacred, god among men, having his temples and his priests, worshipped in his lifetime like a divinity deigning to visit the earth. And finally he had resolved to be supreme pontiff, annexing religious to civil power, and thus by a stroke of genius attaining to the most complete dominion to which man can climb. As the supreme pontiff could not reside in a private house, he declared his abode to be State property. As the supreme pontiff could not leave the vicinity of the temple of Vesta, he built a temple to that goddess near his own dwelling, leaving the guardianship of the ancient altar below the Palatine to the Vestal virgins. He spared no effort, for he well realised that human omnipotence, the mastery of mankind and the world, lay in that reunion of sovereignty, in being both king and priest, emperor and pope. All the sap of a mighty race, all the victories achieved, and all the favours of fortune yet to be garnered, blossomed forth in Augustus, in a unique splendour which was never again to shed such brilliant radiance. He was really the master of the world, amidst the conquered and pacified nations,

encompassed by immortal glory in literature and in art. In him would seem to have been satisfied the old intense ambition of his people, the ambition which it had pursued through centuries of patient conquest, to become the people-king. The blood of Rome, the blood of Augustus, at last coruscated in the sunlight, in the purple of empire. And the blood of Augustus, of the divine, triumphant, absolute sovereign of bodies and souls, of the man in whom seven centuries of national pride had culminated, was to descend through the ages, through an innumerable posterity with a heritage of boundless pride and ambition. For it was fatal: the blood of Augustus was bound to spring into life once more and pulsate in the veins of all the successive masters of Rome, ever haunting them with the dream of ruling the whole world. And later on, after the decline and fall, when power had once more become divided between the king and the priest, the popes — their hearts burning with the red, devouring blood of their great forerunner — had no other passion, no other policy, through the centuries, than that of attaining to civil dominion, to the totality of human power.

But Augustus being dead, his palace having been closed and consecrated, Pierre saw that of Tiberius spring up from the soil. It had stood where his feet now rested, where the beautiful evergreen oaks sheltered him. He pictured it with courts, porticoes, and halls, both substantial and grand, despite the gloomy bent of the emperor who betook himself far from Rome to live amongst informers and debauchees, with his heart and brain poisoned by power to the point of

crime and most extraordinary insanity. Then the palace of Caligula followed, an enlargement of that of Tiberius, with arcades set up to increase its extent, and a bridge thrown over the Forum to the Capitol, in order that the prince might go thither at his ease to converse with Jove, whose son he claimed to be. And sovereignty also rendered this one ferocious — a madman with omnipotence to do as he listed! Then, after Claudius, Nero, not finding the Palatine large enough, seized upon the delightful gardens climbing the Esquiline in order to set up his Golden House, a dream of sumptuous immensity which he could not complete and the ruins of which disappeared in the troubles following the death of this monster whom pride demented. Next, in eighteen months, Galba, Otho, and Vitellius fell one upon the other, in mire and in blood, the purple converting them also into imbeciles and monsters, gorged like unclean beasts at the trough of imperial enjoyment. And afterwards came the Flavians, at first a respite, with common-sense and human kindness: Vespasian; next Titus, who built but little on the Palatine; but then Domitian, in whom the sombre madness of omnipotence burst forth anew amidst a *régime* of fear and spying, idiotic atrocities and crimes, debauchery contrary to nature, and building enterprises born of insane vanity instinct with a desire to outvie the temples of the gods. The palace of Domitian, parted by a lane from that of Tiberius, arose colossal-like — a palace of fairyland. There was the hall of audience, with its throne of gold, its sixteen columns of Phrygian and Numidian marble and its eight niches containing

colossal statues: there were the hall of justice, the vast dining-room, the peristylum, the sleeping apartments, where granite, porphyry, and alabaster overflowed, carved and decorated by the most famous artists, and lavished on all sides in order to dazzle the world. And finally, many years later, a last palace was added to all the others—that of Septimius Severus: again a building of pride, with arches supporting lofty halls, terraced storeys, towers o’ertopping the roofs, a perfect Babylonian pile, rising up at the extreme point of the mount in view of the Appian Way, so that the emperor’s compatriots—those from the province of Africa, where he was born—might, on reaching the horizon, marvel at his fortune and worship him in his glory.

And now Pierre beheld all those palaces which he had conjured up around him, resuscitated, resplendent in the full sunlight. They were as if linked together, parted merely by the narrowest of passages. In order that not an inch of that precious summit might be lost, they had sprouted thickly like the monstrous florescence of strength, power, and unbridled pride which satisfied itself at the cost of millions, bleeding the whole world for the enjoyment of one man. And in truth there was but one palace altogether, a palace enlarged as soon as one emperor died and was placed among the deities, and another, shunning the consecrated pile where possibly the shadow of death frightened him, experienced an imperious need to build a house of his own and perpetuate in everlasting stone the memory of his reign. All the emperors were seized with this building craze; it was like a disease which

the very throne seemed to carry from one occupant to another with growing intensity, a consuming desire to excel all predecessors by thicker and higher walls, by a more and more wonderful profusion of marbles, columns, and statues. And among all these princes there was the idea of a glorious survival, of leaving a testimony of their greatness to dazzled and stupefied generations, of perpetuating themselves by marvels which would not perish but for ever weigh heavily upon the earth, when their own light ashes should long since have been swept away by the winds. And thus the Palatine became but the venerable base of a monstrous edifice, a thick vegetation of adjoining buildings, each new pile being like a fresh eruption of feverish pride; while the whole, now showing the snowy brightness of white marble and now the glowing hues of coloured marble, ended by crowning Rome and the world with the most extraordinary and most insolent abode of sovereignty — whether palace, temple, basilica, or cathedral — that omnipotence and dominion have ever reared under the heavens.

But death lurked beneath this excess of strength and glory. Seven hundred and thirty years of monarchy and republic had sufficed to make Rome great; and in five centuries of imperial sway the people-king was to be devoured down to its last muscles. There was the immensity of the territory, the more distant provinces gradually pillaged and exhausted; there was the fisc consuming everything, digging the pit of fatal bankruptcy; and there was the degeneration of the people, poisoned by the scenes of the circus and the arena, fallen to the sloth and debauchery of their

masters, the Cæsars, while mercenaries fought the foe and tilled the soil. Already at the time of Constantine, Rome had a rival, Byzantium; disruption followed with Honorius; and then some ten emperors sufficed for decomposition to be complete, for the bones of the dying prey to be picked clean, the end coming with Romulus Augustulus, the sorry creature whose name is, so to say, a mockery of the whole glorious history, a buffet for both the founder of Rome and the founder of the empire.

The palaces, the colossal assemblage of walls, storeys, terraces, and gaping roofs, still remained on the deserted Palatine; many ornaments and statues, however, had already been removed to Byzantium. And the empire, having become Christian, had afterwards closed the temples and extinguished the fire of Vesta, whilst yet respecting the ancient Palladium. But in the fifth century the barbarians rush upon Rome, sack and burn it, and carry the spoils spared by the flames away in their chariots. As long as the city was dependent on Byzantium a custodian of the imperial palaces remained there watching over the Palatine. Then all fades and crumbles in the night of the middle ages. It would really seem that the popes then slowly took the place of the Cæsars, succeeding them both in their abandoned marble halls and their ever-subsisting passion for domination. Some of them assuredly dwelt in the palace of Septimius Severus; a council of the Church was held in the Septizonium; and, later on, Gelasius II was elected in a neighbouring monastery on the sacred mount. It was as if Augustus were again rising

from the tomb, once more master of the world, with a Sacred College of Cardinals resuscitating the Roman Senate. In the twelfth century the Septizonium belonged to some Benedictine monks, and was sold by them to the powerful Frangipani family, who fortified it as they had already fortified the Colosseum and the arches of Constantine and Titus, thus forming a vast fortress round about the venerable cradle of the city. And the violent deeds of civil war and the ravages of invasion swept by like whirlwinds, throwing down the walls, razing the palaces and towers. And afterwards successive generations invaded the ruins, installed themselves in them by right of trove and conquest, turned them into cellars, store-places for forage, and stables for mules. Kitchen gardens were formed, vines were planted on the spots where fallen soil had covered the mosaics of the imperial halls. All around nettles and brambles grew up, and ivy preyed on the overturned porticoes, till there came a day when the colossal assemblage of palaces and temples, which marble was to have rendered eternal, seemed to dive beneath the dust, to disappear under the surging soil and vegetation which impassive Nature threw over it. And then, in the hot sunlight, among the wild flowerets, only big, buzzing flies remained, whilst herds of goats strayed in freedom through the throne-room of Domitian and the fallen sanctuary of Apollo.

A great shudder passed through Pierre. To think of so much strength, pride, and grandeur, and such rapid ruin — a world for ever swept away! He wondered how entire palaces, yet peopled by admirable

statuary, could thus have been gradually buried without any one thinking of protecting them. It was no sudden catastrophe which had swallowed up those masterpieces, subsequently to be disinterred with exclamations of admiring wonder; they had been drowned, as it were — caught progressively by the legs, the waist, and the neck, till at last the head had sunk beneath the rising tide. And how could one explain that generations had heedlessly witnessed such things without thought of putting forth a helping hand? It would seem as if, at a given moment, a black curtain were suddenly drawn across the world, as if mankind began afresh, with a new and empty brain which needed moulding and furnishing. Rome had become depopulated; men ceased to repair the ruins left by fire and sword; the edifices which by their very immensity had become useless were utterly neglected, allowed to crumble and fall. And then, too, the new religion everywhere hunted down the old one, stole its temples, overturned its gods. Earthly deposits probably completed the disaster — there were, it is said, both earthquakes and inundations — and the soil was ever rising, the alluvia of the young Christian world buried the ancient pagan society. And after the pillaging of the temples, the theft of the bronze roofs and marble columns, the climax came with the filching of the stones torn from the Colosseum and the Theatre of Marcellus, with the pounding of the statuary and sculpture-work, thrown into kilns to procure the lime needed for the new monuments of Catholic Rome.

It was nearly one o'clock, and Pierre awoke as from

a dream. The sun-rays were streaming in a golden rain between the shiny leaves of the ever-green oaks above him, and down below Rome lay dozing, overcome by the great heat. Then he made up his mind to leave the garden, and went stumbling over the rough pavement of the Clivus Victoriae, his mind still haunted by blinding visions. To complete his day, he had resolved to visit the old Appian Way during the afternoon, and, unwilling to return to the Via Giulia, he lunched at a suburban tavern, in a large, dim room, where, alone with the buzzing flies, he lingered for more than two hours, awaiting the sinking of the sun.

Ah! that Appian Way, that ancient queen of the high roads, crossing the Campagna in a long straight line with rows of proud tombs on either hand—to Pierre it seemed like a triumphant prolongation of the Palatine. He there found the same passion for splendour and domination, the same craving to eternalise the memory of Roman greatness in marble and daylight. Oblivion was vanquished; the dead refused to rest, and remained for ever erect among the living, on either side of that road which was traversed by multitudes from the entire world. The deified images of those who were now but dust still gazed on the passers-by with empty eyes; the inscriptions still spoke, proclaiming names and titles. In former times the rows of sepulchres must have extended without interruption along all the straight, level miles between the tomb of Cæcilia Metella and that of Casale Rotondo, forming an elongated cemetery where the powerful and wealthy competed as to who should

leave the most colossal and lavishly decorated mausoleum: such, indeed, was the craving for survival, the passion for pompous immortality, the desire to deify death by lodging it in temples; whereof the present-day monumental splendour of the Genoese Campo Santo and the Roman Campo Verano is, so to say, a remote inheritance. And what a vision it was to picture all the tremendous tombs on the right and left of the glorious pavement which the legions trod on their return from the conquest of the world! That tomb of Cæcilia Metella, with its bond-stones so huge, its walls so thick that the middle ages transformed it into the battlemented keep of a fortress! And then all the tombs which follow, the modern structures erected in order that the marble fragments discovered might be set in place, the old blocks of brick and concrete, despoiled of their sculptured-work and rising up like seared rocks, yet still suggesting their original shapes as shrines, *cippi*, and *sarcophagi*. There is a wondrous succession of high reliefs figuring the dead in groups of three and five; statues in which the dead live deified, erect; seats contrived in niches in order that wayfarers may rest and bless the hospitality of the dead; laudatory epitaphs celebrating the dead, both the known and the unknown, the children of Sextius Pompeius Justus, the departed Marcus Servilius Quartus, Hilarius Fuscus, Rabirius Hermodorus; without counting the sepulchres venturously ascribed to Seneca and the Horatii and Curiatii. And finally there is the most extraordinary and gigantic of all the tombs, that known as Casale Rotondo, which is so large that it has been possible to establish a farmhouse and

an olive garden on its substructures, which formerly upheld a double rotunda, adorned with Corinthian pilasters, large candelabra, and scenic masks.¹

Pierre, having driven in a cab as far as the tomb of Cæcilia Metella, continued his excursion on foot, going slowly towards Casale Rotondo. In many places the old pavement appears — large blocks of basaltic lava, worn into deep ruts that jolt the best-hung vehicles. Among the ruined tombs on either hand run bands of grass, the neglected grass of cemeteries, scorched by the summer suns and sprinkled with big violet thistles and tall sulphur-wort. Parapets of dry stones, breast high, enclose the russet roadsides, which resound with the crepitation of grasshoppers; and, beyond, the Campagna stretches, vast and bare, as far as the eye can see. A parasol pine, a eucalyptus, some olive or fig trees, white with dust, alone rise up near the road at infrequent intervals. On the left the ruddy arches of the Acqua Claudia show vigorously in the meadows, and stretches of poorly cultivated land, vineyards, and little farms, extend to the blue and lilac Sabine and Alban hills, where Frascati, Rocca di Papa, and Albano set bright spots, which grow and whiten as one gets nearer to them. Then, on the right, towards the sea, the houseless, treeless plain grows and spreads with vast, broad ripples, extraordinary ocean-like simplicity and grandeur, a long, straight line alone parting it from the sky. At the height of summer all burns and flares on this

¹ Some believe this tomb to have been that of Messalla Corvinus, the historian and poet, a friend of Augustus and Horace; others ascribe it to his son, Aurelius Messallinus Cotta. — *Trans.*

limitless prairie, then of a ruddy gold; but in September a green tinge begins to suffuse the ocean of herbage, which dies away in the pink and mauve and vivid blue of the fine sunsets.

As Pierre, quite alone and in a dreary mood, slowly paced the endless, flat highway, that resurrection of the past which he had beheld on the Palatine again confronted his mind's eye. On either hand the tombs once more rose up intact, with marble of dazzling whiteness. Had not the head of a colossal statue been found, mingled with fragments of huge sphinxes, at the foot of yonder vase-shaped mass of bricks? He seemed to see the entire colossal statue standing again between the huge, crouching beasts. Farther on a beautiful headless statue of a woman had been discovered in the cella of a sepulchre, and he beheld it, again whole, with features expressive of grace and strength smiling upon life. The inscriptions also became perfect; he could read and understand them at a glance, as if living among those dead ones of two thousand years ago. And the road, too, became peopled: the chariots thundered, the armies tramped along, the people of Rome jostled him with the feverish agitation of great communities. It was a return of the times of the Flavians or the Antonines, the palmy years of the empire, when the pomp of the Appian Way, with its grand sepulchres, carved and adorned like temples, attained its apogee. What a monumental Street of Death, what an approach to Rome, that highway, straight as an arrow, where with the extraordinary pomp of their pride, which had survived their dust, the great dead greeted the traveller,

ushered him into the presence of the living! He may well have wondered among what sovereign people, what masters of the world, he was about to find himself—a nation which had committed to its dead the duty of telling strangers that it allowed nothing whatever to perish—that its dead, like its city, remained eternal and glorious in monuments of extraordinary vastness! To think of it—the foundations of a fortress, and a tower sixty feet in diameter, that one woman might be laid to rest! And then, far away, at the end of the superb, dazzling highway, bordered with the marble of its funereal palaces, Pierre, turning round, distinctly beheld the Palatine, with the marble of its imperial palaces—the huge assemblage of palaces whose omnipotence had dominated the world!

But suddenly he started: two carabinieri had just appeared among the ruins. The spot was not safe; the authorities watched over tourists even in broad daylight. And later on came another meeting which caused him some emotion. He perceived an ecclesiastic, a tall old man, in a black cassock, edged and girt with red; and was surprised to recognise Cardinal Boccanera, who had quitted the roadway, and was slowly strolling along the band of grass, among the tall thistles and sulphur-wort. With his head lowered and his feet brushing against the fragments of the tombs, the Cardinal did not even see Pierre. The young priest courteously turned aside, surprised to find him so far from home and alone. Then, on perceiving a heavy coach, drawn by two black horses, behind a building, he understood matters. A foot-

man in black livery was waiting motionless beside the carriage, and the coachman had not quitted his box. And Pierre remembered that the Cardinals were not expected to walk in Rome, so that they were compelled to drive into the country when they desired to take exercise. But what haughty sadness, what solitary and, so to say, ostracised grandeur there was about that tall, thoughtful old man, thus forced to seek the desert, and wander among the tombs, in order to breathe a little of the evening air!

Pierre had lingered there for long hours; the twilight was coming on, and once again he witnessed a lovely sunset. On his left the Campagna became blurred, and assumed a slaty hue, against which the yellowish arcades of the aqueduct showed very plainly, while the Alban hills, far away, faded into pink. Then, on the right, towards the sea, the planet sank among a number of cloudlets, figuring an archipelago of gold in an ocean of dying embers. And excepting the sapphire sky, studded with rubies, above the endless line of the Campagna, which was likewise changed into a sparkling lake, the dull green of the herbage turning to a liquid emerald tint, there was nothing to be seen, neither a hillock nor a flock — nothing, indeed, but Cardinal Boccanera's black figure, erect among the tombs, and looking, as it were, enlarged as it stood out against the last purple flush of the sunset.

Early on the following morning Pierre, eager to see everything, returned to the Appian Way in order to visit the catacomb of St. Calixtus, the most extensive and remarkable of the old Christian cemeteries, and

one, too, where several of the early popes were buried. You ascend through a scorched garden, past olives and cypresses, reach a shanty of boards and plaster in which a little trade in "articles of piety" is carried on, and there a modern and fairly easy flight of steps enables you to descend. Pierre fortunately found there some French Trappists, who guard these catacombs and show them to strangers. One brother was on the point of going down with two French ladies, the mother and daughter, the former still comely and the other radiant with youth. They stood there smiling, though already slightly frightened, while the monk lighted some long, slim candles. He was a man with a bossy brow, the large, massive jaw of an obstinate believer and pale eyes bespeaking an ingenuous soul.

"Ah! Monsieur l'Abbé," he said to Pierre, "you've come just in time. If the ladies are willing, you had better come with us; for three Brothers are already below with people, and you would have a long time to wait. This is the great season for visitors."

The ladies politely nodded, and the Trappist handed a candle to the priest. In all probability neither mother nor daughter was devout, for both glanced askance at their new companion's cassock, and suddenly became serious. Then they all went down and found themselves in a narrow subterranean corridor. "Take care, mesdames," repeated the Trappist, lighting the ground with his candle. "Walk slowly, for there are projections and slopes."

Then, in a shrill voice full of extraordinary conviction, he began his explanations. Pierre had descended

in silence, his heart beating with emotion. Ah! how many times, indeed, in his innocent seminary days, had he not dreamt of those catacombs of the early Christians, those asylums of the primitive faith! Even recently, while writing his book, he had often thought of them as of the most ancient and venerable remains of that community of the lowly and simple, for the return of which he called. But his brain was full of pages written by poets and great prose writers. He had beheld the catacombs through the magnifying glass of those imaginative authors, and had believed them to be vast, similar to subterranean cities, with broad highways and spacious halls, fit for the accommodation of vast crowds. And now how poor and humble the reality!

“Well, yes,” said the Trappist in reply to the ladies’ questions, “the corridor is scarcely more than a yard in width; two persons could not pass along side by side. How they dug it? Oh! it was simple enough. A family or a burial association needed a place of sepulchre. Well, a first gallery was excavated with pickaxes in soil of this description — granular tufa, as it is called — a reddish substance, as you can see, both soft and yet resistant, easy to work and at the same time waterproof. In a word, just the substance that was needed, and one, too, that has preserved the remains of the buried in a wonderful way.” He paused and brought the flamelet of his candle near to the compartments excavated on either hand of the passage. “Look,” he continued, “these are the *loculi*. Well, a subterranean gallery was dug, and on both sides these compartments were hollowed out,

one above the other. The bodies of the dead were laid in them, for the most part simply wrapped in shrouds. Then the aperture was closed with tiles or marble slabs, carefully cemented. So, as you can see, everything explains itself. If other families joined the first one, or the burial association became more numerous, fresh galleries were added to those already filled. Passages were excavated on either hand, in every sense; and, indeed, a second and lower storey, at times even a third, was dug out. And here, you see, we are in a gallery which is certainly thirteen feet high. Now, you may wonder how they raised the bodies to place them in the compartments of the top tier. Well, they did not raise them to any such height; in all their work they kept on going lower and lower, removing more and more of the soil as the compartments became filled. And in this wise, in these catacombs of St. Calixtus, in less than four centuries, the Christians excavated more than ten miles of galleries, in which more than a million of their dead must have been laid to rest. Now, there are dozens of catacombs; the environs of Rome are honeycombed with them. Think of that, and perhaps you will be able to form some idea of the vast number of people who were buried in this manner."

Pierre listened, feeling greatly impressed. He had once visited a coal pit in Belgium, and he here found the same narrow passages, the same heavy, stifling atmosphere, the same nihility of darkness and silence. The flamelets of the candles showed merely like stars in the deep gloom; they shed no radiance around. And he at last understood the character of this fune-

real, termite-like labour — these chance burrowings continued according to requirements, without art, method, or symmetry. The rugged soil was ever ascending and descending, the sides of the gallery snaked: neither plumb-line nor square had been used. All this, indeed, had simply been a work of charity and necessity, wrought by simple, willing grave-diggers, illiterate craftsmen, with the clumsy handiwork of the decline and fall. Proof thereof was furnished by the inscriptions and emblems on the marble slabs. They reminded one of the childish drawings which street urchins scrawl upon blank walls.

“You see,” the Trappist continued, “most frequently there is merely a name; and sometimes there is no name, but simply the words *In Pace*. At other times there is an emblem, the dove of purity, the palm of martyrdom, or else the fish whose name in Greek is composed of five letters which, as initials, signify: ‘Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour.’”

He again brought his candle near to the marble slabs, and the palm could be distinguished: a central stroke, whence started a few oblique lines; and then came the dove or the fish, roughly outlined, a zigzag indicating a tail, two bars representing the bird’s feet, while a round point simulated an eye. And the letters of the short inscriptions were all askew, of various sizes, often quite misshapen, as in the coarse handwriting of the ignorant and simple.

However, they reached a crypt, a sort of little hall, where the graves of several popes had been found; among others that of Sixtus II, a holy martyr, in whose honour there was a superbly engraved metrical

inscription set up by Pope Damasus. Then, in another hall, a family vault of much the same size, decorated at a later stage, with naïve mural paintings, the spot where St. Cecilia's body had been discovered was shown. And the explanations continued. The Trappist dilated on the paintings, drawing from them a confirmation of every dogma and belief, baptism, the Eucharist, the resurrection, Lazarus arising from the tomb, Jonas cast up by the whale, Daniel in the lions' den, Moses drawing water from the rock, and Christ — shown beardless, as was the practice in the early ages — accomplishing His various miracles.

"You see," repeated the Trappist, "all those things are shown there; and remember that none of the paintings was specially prepared: they are absolutely authentic."

At a question from Pierre, whose astonishment was increasing, he admitted that the catacombs had been mere cemeteries at the outset, when no religious ceremonies had been celebrated in them. It was only later, in the fourth century, when the martyrs were honoured, that the crypts were utilised for worship. And in the same way they only became places of refuge during the persecutions, when the Christians had to conceal the entrances to them. Previously they had remained freely and legally open. This was indeed their true history: cemeteries four centuries old becoming places of asylum, ravaged at times during the persecutions; afterwards held in veneration till the eighth century; then despoiled of their holy relics, and subsequently blocked up and forgotten, so that they remained buried during more than seven hun-

dred years, people thinking of them so little that at the time of the first searches in the fifteenth century they were considered an extraordinary discovery — an intricate historical problem — one, moreover, which only our own age has solved.

“Please stoop, mesdames,” resumed the Trappist. “In this compartment here is a skeleton which has not been touched. It has been lying here for sixteen or seventeen hundred years, and will show you how the bodies were laid out. Savants say that it is the skeleton of a female, probably a young girl. It was still quite perfect last spring; but the skull, as you can see, is now split open. An American broke it with his walking stick to make sure that it was genuine.”

The ladies leaned forward, and the flickering light illumined their pale faces, expressive of mingled fright and compassion. Especially noticeable was the pitiful, pain-fraught look which appeared on the countenance of the daughter, so full of life with her red lips and large black eyes. Then all relapsed into gloom, and the little candles were borne aloft and went their way through the heavy darkness of the galleries. The visit lasted another hour, for the Trappist did not spare a detail, fond as he was of certain nooks and corners, and as zealous as if he desired to work the redemption of his visitors.

While Pierre followed the others, a complete evolution took place within him. As he looked about him, and formed a more and more complete idea of his surroundings, his first stupefaction at finding the reality so different from the embellished accounts of story-

tellers and poets, his disillusion at being plunged into such rudely excavated mole-burrows, gave way to fraternal emotion. It was not that he thought of the fifteen hundred martyrs whose sacred bones had rested there. But how humble, resigned, yet full of hope had been those who had chosen such a place of sepulchre! Those low, darksome galleries were but temporary sleeping-places for the Christians. If they did not burn the bodies of their dead, as the Pagans did, it was because, like the Jews, they believed in the resurrection of the body; and it was that lovely idea of sleep, of tranquil rest after a just life, whilst awaiting the celestial reward, which imparted such intense peacefulness, such infinite charm, to the black, subterranean city. Everything there spoke of calm and silent night; everything there slumbered in rapturous quiescence, patient until the far-off awakening. What could be more touching than those terra-cotta tiles, those marble slabs, which bore not even a name — nothing but the words *In Pace* — at peace. Ah! to be at peace — life's work at last accomplished; to sleep in peace, to hope in peace for the advent of heaven! And the peacefulness seemed the more delightful as it was enjoyed in such deep humility. Doubtless the diggers worked chance-wise and clumsily; the craftsmen no longer knew how to engrave a name or carve a palm or a dove. Art had vanished; but all the feebleness and ignorance were instinct with the youth of a new humanity. Poor and lowly and meek ones swarmed there, reposing beneath the soil, whilst up above the sun continued its everlasting task. You found there charity and fraternity and death; husband

and wife often lying together with their offspring at their feet; the great mass of the unknown submerging the personage, the bishop, or the martyr; the most touching equality — that springing from modesty — prevailing amidst all that dust, with compartments ever similar and slabs destitute of ornament, so that rows and rows of the sleepers mingled without distinctive sign. The inscriptions seldom ventured on a word of praise, and then how prudent, how delicate it was: the men were very worthy, very pious: the women very gentle, very beautiful, very chaste. A perfume of infancy arose, unlimited human affection spread: this was death as understood by the primitive Christians — death which hid itself to await the resurrection, and dreamt no more of the empire of the world!

And all at once before Pierre's eyes arose a vision of the sumptuous tombs of the Appian Way, displaying the domineering pride of a whole civilisation in the sunlight — tombs of vast dimensions, with a profusion of marbles, grandiloquent inscriptions, and masterpieces of sculptured-work. Ah! what an extraordinary contrast between that pompous avenue of death, conducting, like a highway of triumph, to the regal Eternal City, when compared with the subterranean necropolis of the Christians, that city of hidden death, so gentle, so beautiful, and so chaste! Here only quiet slumber, desired and accepted night, resignation and patience were to be found. Millions of human beings had here laid themselves to rest in all humility, had slept for centuries, and would still be sleeping here, lulled by the silence and the gloom,

if the living had not intruded on their desire to remain in oblivion so long as the trumpets of the Judgment Day did not awaken them. Death had then spoken of Life: nowhere had there been more intimate and touching life than in these buried cities of the unknown, lowly dead. And a mighty breath had formerly come from them—the breath of a new humanity destined to renew the world. With the advent of meekness, contempt for the flesh, terror and hatred of nature, relinquishment of terrestrial joys, and a passion for death, which delivers and opens the portals of Paradise, another world had begun. And the blood of Augustus, so proud of purpling in the sunlight, so fired by the passion for sovereign dominion, seemed for a moment to disappear, as if, indeed, the new world had sucked it up in the depths of its gloomy sepulchres.

However, the Trappist insisted on showing the ladies the steps of Diocletian, and began to tell them the legend. “Yes,” said he, “it was a miracle. One day, under that emperor, some soldiers were pursuing several Christians, who took refuge in these catacombs; and when the soldiers followed them inside the steps suddenly gave way, and all the persecutors were hurled to the bottom. The steps remain broken to this day. Come and see them; they are close by.”

But the ladies were quite overcome, so affected by their prolonged sojourn in the gloom and by the tales of death which the Trappist had poured into their ears that they insisted on going up again. Moreover, the candles were coming to an end. They were all dazzled when they found themselves once more in the

sunlight, outside the little hut where articles of piety and souvenirs were sold. The girl bought a paper weight, a piece of marble on which was engraved the fish symbolical of "Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour of Mankind."

On the afternoon of that same day Pierre decided to visit St. Peter's. He had as yet only driven across the superb piazza with its obelisk and twin fountains, encircled by Bernini's colonnades, those four rows of columns and pilasters which form a girdle of monumental majesty. At the far end rises the basilica, its façade making it look smaller and heavier than it really is, but its sovereign dome nevertheless filling the heavens.

Pebbled, deserted inclines stretched out, and steps followed steps, worn and white, under the burning sun; but at last Pierre reached the door and went in. It was three o'clock. Broad sheets of light streamed in through the high square windows, and some ceremony — the vesper service, no doubt — was beginning in the Capella Clementina on the left. Pierre, however, heard nothing; he was simply struck by the immensity of the edifice, as with raised eyes he slowly walked along. At the entrance came the giant basins for holy water with their boy-angels as chubby as Cupids; then the nave, vaulted and decorated with sunken coffers; then the four cyclopean buttress-piers upholding the dome, and then again the transepts and apsis, each as large as one of our churches. And the proud pomp, the dazzling, crushing splendour of everything, also astonished him: he marvelled at the cupola, looking like a planet, resplendent with the gold

and bright colours of its mosaic-work, at the sumptuous *baldacchino* of bronze, crowning the high altar raised above the very tomb of St. Peter, and whence descend the double steps of the Confession, illumined by seven and eighty lamps, which are always kept burning. And finally he was lost in astonishment at the extraordinary profusion of marble, both white and coloured. Oh! those polychromatic marbles, Bernini's luxurious passion! The splendid pavement reflecting the entire edifice, the facings of the pilasters with their medallions of popes, the tiara and the keys borne aloft by chubby angels, the walls covered with emblems, particularly the dove of Innocent X, the niches with their colossal statues uncouth in taste, the *loggie* and their balconies, the balustrade and double steps of the Confession, the rich altars and yet richer tombs — all, nave, aisles, transepts, and apsis, were in marble, resplendent with the wealth of marble; not a nook small as the palm of one's hand appearing but it showed the insolent opulence of marble. And the basilica triumphed, beyond discussion, recognised and admired by every one as the largest and most splendid church in the whole world — the personification of hugeness and magnificence combined.

Pierre still wandered on, gazing, overcome, as yet not distinguishing details. He paused for a moment before the bronze statue of St. Peter, seated in a stiff, hierarchical attitude on a marble pedestal. A few of the faithful were there kissing the large toe of the Saint's right foot. Some of them carefully wiped it before applying their lips; others, with no thought of cleanliness, kissed it, pressed their foreheads to it, and

then kissed it again. Next, Pierre turned into the transept on the left, where stand the confessionals. Priests are ever stationed there, ready to confess penitents in every language. Others wait, holding long staves, with which they lightly tap the heads of kneeling sinners, who thereby obtain thirty days' indulgence. However, there were few people present, and inside the small wooden boxes the priests occupied their leisure time in reading and writing, as if they were at home. Then Pierre again found himself before the Confession, and gazed with interest at the eighty lamps, scintillating like stars. The high altar, at which the Pope alone can officiate, seemed wrapped in the haughty melancholy of solitude under its gigantic, flowery *baldacchino*, the casting and gilding of which cost two and twenty thousand pounds. But suddenly Pierre remembered the ceremony in the Capella Clementina, and felt astonished, for he could hear nothing of it. As he drew near a faint breath, like the far-away piping of a flute, was wafted to him. Then the volume of sound slowly increased, but it was only on reaching the chapel that he recognised an organ peal. The sunlight here filtered through red curtains drawn before the windows, and thus the chapel glowed like a furnace whilst resounding with the grave music. But in that huge pile all became so slight, so weak, that at sixty paces neither voice nor organ could be distinguished.

On entering the basilica Pierre had fancied that it was quite empty and lifeless. There were, however, some people there, but so few and far between that their presence was not noticed. A few tourists wan-

dered about wearily, guide-book in hand. In the grand nave a painter with his easel was taking a view, as in a public gallery. Then a French seminary went by, conducted by a prelate who named and explained the tombs. But in all that space these fifty or a hundred people looked merely like a few black ants who had lost themselves and were vainly seeking their way. And Pierre pictured himself in some gigantic gala hall or tremendous vestibule in an immeasurable palace of reception. The broad sheets of sunlight streaming through the lofty square windows of plain white glass illumined the church with blending radiance. There was not a single stool or chair: nothing but the superb, bare pavement, such as you might find in a museum, shining mirror-like under the dancing shower of sun-rays. Nor was there a single corner for solitary reflection, a nook of gloom and mystery, where one might kneel and pray. In lieu thereof the sumptuous, sovereign dazzlement of broad daylight prevailed upon every side. And, on thus suddenly finding himself in this deserted opera-house, all aglow with flaring gold and purple, Pierre could but remember the quivering gloom of the Gothic cathedrals of France, where dim crowds sob and supplicate amidst a forest of pillars. In presence of all this ceremonial majesty — this huge, empty pomp, which was all Body — he recalled with a pang the emaciate architecture and statuary of the middle ages, which were all Soul. He vainly sought for some poor, kneeling woman, some creature swayed by faith or suffering, yielding in a modest half-light to thoughts of the unknown, and with closed lips holding communion with the invisible.

These he found not: there was but the weary wandering of the tourists, and the bustle of the prelates conducting the young priests to the obligatory stations; while the vesper service continued in the left-hand chapel, nought of it reaching the ears of the visitors save, perhaps, a confused vibration, as of the peal of a bell penetrating from outside through the vaults above.

And Pierre then understood that this was the splendid skeleton of a colossus whence life was departing. To fill it, to animate it with a soul, all the gorgeous display of great religious ceremonies was needed; the eighty thousand worshippers which it could hold, the great pontifical pomps, the festivals of Christmas and Easter, the processions and *cortèges* displaying all the luxury of the Church amidst operatic scenery and appointments. And he tried to conjure up a picture of the past magnificence—the basilica overflowing with an idolatrous multitude, and the superhuman *cortège* passing along whilst every head was lowered; the cross and the sword opening the march, the cardinals going two by two, like twin divinities, in their rochets of lace and their mantles and robes of red moire, which train-bearers held up behind them; and at last, with Jove-like pomp, the Pope, carried on a stage draped with red velvet, seated in an arm-chair of red velvet and gold, and dressed in white velvet, with cope of gold, stole of gold, and tiara of gold. The bearers of the *Sedia gestatoria*¹ shone bravely in red tunics broidedered with gold. Above the one and only Sovereign Pontiff of the world the *flabelli* waved

¹ The chair and stage are known by that name. — *Trans.*

those huge fans of feathers which formerly were waved before the idols of pagan Rome. And around the seat of triumph what a dazzling, glorious court there was! The whole pontifical family, the stream of assistant prelates, the patriarchs, the archbishops, and the bishops, with vestments and mitres of gold, the *Camerieri segreti partecipanti* in violet silk, the *Camerieri partecipanti* of the cape and the sword in black velvet Renaissance costumes, with ruffs and golden chains, the whole innumerable ecclesiastical and laical suite, which not even a hundred pages of the "Gerarchia" can completely enumerate, the prothonotaries, the chaplains, the prelates of every class and degree, without mentioning the military household, the gendarmes with their busbies, the Palatine Guards in blue trousers and black tunics, the Swiss Guards costumed in red, yellow, and black, with breastplates of silver, suggesting the men at arms of some drama of the Romantic school, and the Noble Guards, superb in their high boots, white pigskins, red tunics, gold lace, epaulets, and helmets! However, since Rome had become the capital of Italy the doors were no longer thrown wide open; on the rare occasions when the Pope yet came down to officiate, to show himself as the supreme representative of the Divinity on earth, the basilica was filled with chosen ones. To enter it you needed a card of invitation. You no longer saw the people — a throng of fifty, even eighty, thousand Christians — flocking to the Church and swarming within it promiscuously; there was but a select gathering, a congregation of friends convened as for a private function. Even when, by dint of effort, thou-

sands were collected together there, they formed but a picked audience invited to the performance of a monster concert.

And as Pierre strolled among the bright, crude marbles in that cold if gorgeous museum, the feeling grew upon him that he was in some pagan temple raised to the deity of Light and Pomp. The larger temples of ancient Rome were certainly similar piles, upheld by the same precious columns, with walls covered with the same polychromatic marbles and vaulted ceilings having the same gilded panels. And his feeling was destined to become yet more acute after his visits to the other basilicas, which could but reveal the truth to him. First one found the Christian Church quietly, audaciously quartering itself in a pagan church, as, for instance, San Lorenzo in Miranda installed in the temple of Antoninus and Faustina, and retaining the latter's rare porticus in *cipollino* marble and its handsome white marble entablature. Then there was the Christian Church springing from the ruins of the destroyed pagan edifice, as, for example, San Clemente, beneath which centuries of contrary beliefs are stratified: a very ancient edifice of the time of the kings or the republic, then another of the days of the empire identified as a temple of Mithras, and next a basilica of the primitive faith. Then, too, there was the Christian Church, typified by that of Saint Agnes-beyond-the-walls which had been built on exactly the same pattern as the Roman secular basilica — that Tribunal and Exchange which accompanied every Forum. And, in particular, there was the Christian Church erected with material stolen

from the demolished pagan temples. To this testified the sixteen superb columns of that same Saint Agnes, columns of various marbles filched from various gods; the one and twenty columns of Santa Maria in Trastevere, columns of all sorts of orders torn from a temple of Isis and Serapis, who even now are represented on their capitals; also the six and thirty white marble Ionic columns of Santa Maria Maggiore derived from the temple of Juno Lucina; and the two and twenty columns of Santa Maria in Ara Cœli, these varying in substance, size, and workmanship, and certain of them said to have been stolen from Jove himself, from the famous temple of Jupiter Capitolinus which rose upon the sacred summit. In addition, the temples of the opulent Imperial period seemed to resuscitate in our times at San Giovanni in Laterano and San Paolo-fuori-le-mura. Was not that Basilica of San Giovanni — “the Mother and Head of all the churches of the city and the earth” — like the abode of honour of some pagan divinity whose splendid kingdom was of this world? It boasted five naves, parted by four rows of columns; it was a profusion of bas-reliefs, friezes, and entablatures, and its twelve colossal statues of the Apostles looked like subordinate deities lining the approach to the master of the gods! And did not San Paolo, lately completed, its new marbles shimmering like mirrors, recall the abode of the Olympian immortals, typical temple as it was with its majestic colonnade, its flat, gilt-panelled ceiling, its marble pavement incomparably beautiful both in substance and workmanship, its violet columns with white bases and capitals, and its white

entablature with violet frieze: everywhere, indeed, you found the mingling of those two colours so divinely carnal in their harmony. And there, as at St. Peter's, not one patch of gloom, not one nook of mystery where one might peer into the invisible, could be found! And, withal, St. Peter's remained the monster, the colossus, larger than the largest of all others, an extravagant testimony of what the mad passion for the huge can achieve when human pride, by dint of spending millions, dreams of lodging the divinity in an over-vast, over-opulent palace of stone, where in truth that pride itself, and not the divinity, triumphs!

And to think that after long centuries that gala colossus had been the outcome of the fervour of primitive faith! You found there a blossoming of that ancient sap, peculiar to the soil of Rome, which in all ages has thrown up preposterous edifices, of exaggerated hugeness and dazzling and ruinous luxury. It would seem as if the absolute masters successively ruling the city brought that passion for cyclopean building with them, derived it from the soil in which they grew, for they transmitted it one to the other, without a pause, from civilisation to civilisation, however diverse and contrary their minds. It has all been, so to say, a continuous blossoming of human vanity, a passionate desire to set one's name on an imperishable wall, and, after being master of the world, to leave behind one an indestructible trace, a tangible proof of one's passing glory, an eternal edifice of bronze and marble fit to attest that glory until the end of time. At the bot-

tom the spirit of conquest, the proud ambition to dominate the world, subsists; and when all has crumbled, and a new society has sprung up from the ruins of its predecessor, men have erred in imagining it to be cured of the sin of pride, steeped in humility once more, for it has had the old blood in its veins, and has yielded to the same insolent madness as its ancestors, a prey to all the violence of its heredity directly it has become great and strong. Among the illustrious popes there has not been one that did not seek to build, did not revert to the traditions of the Cæsars, eternising their reigns in stone and raising temples for resting-places, so as to rank among the gods. Ever the same passion for terrestrial immortality has burst forth: it has been a battle as to who should leave the highest, most substantial, most gorgeous monument; and so acute has been the disease that those who, for lack of means and opportunity, have been unable to build, and have been forced to content themselves with repairing, have, nevertheless, desired to bequeath the memory of their modest achievements to subsequent generations by commemorative marble slabs engraved with pompous inscriptions! These slabs are to be seen on every side: not a wall has ever been strengthened but some pope has stamped it with his arms, not a ruin has been restored, not a palace repaired, not a fountain cleaned, but the reigning pope has signed the work with his Roman and pagan title of "*Pontifex Maximus*." It is a haunting passion, a form of involuntary debauchery, the fated florescence of that compost of ruins, that dust of edifices whence new edifices are ever arising.

And given the perversion with which the old Roman soil almost immediately tarnished the doctrines of Jesus, that resolute passion for domination and that desire for terrestrial glory which wrought the triumph of Catholicism in scorn of the humble and pure, the fraternal and simple ones of the primitive Church, one may well ask whether Rome has ever been Christian at all!

And whilst Pierre was for the second time walking round the huge basilica, admiring the tombs of the popes, truth, like a sudden illumination, burst upon him and filled him with its glow. Ah! those tombs! Yonder in the full sunlight, in the rosy Campagna, on either side of the Appian Way—that triumphal approach to Rome, conducting the stranger to the august Palatine with its crown of circling palaces—there arose the gigantic tombs of the powerful and wealthy, tombs of unparalleled artistic splendour, perpetuating in marble the pride and pomp of a strong race that had mastered the world. Then, near at hand, beneath the sod, in the shrouding night of wretched mole-holes, other tombs were hidden—the tombs of the lowly, the poor, and the suffering—tombs destitute of art or display, but whose very humility proclaimed that a breath of affection and resignation had passed by, that One had come preaching love and fraternity, the relinquishment of the wealth of the earth for the everlasting joys of a future life, and committing to the soil the good seed of His Gospel, sowing the new humanity which was to transform the olden world. And, behold, from that seed, buried in the soil for centuries, behold, from

those humble, unobtrusive tombs, where martyrs slept their last and gentle sleep whilst waiting for the glorious call, yet other tombs had sprung, tombs as gigantic and as pompous as the ancient, destroyed sepulchres of the idolaters, tombs uprearing their marbles among a pagan-temple-like splendour, proclaiming the same superhuman pride, the same mad passion for universal sovereignty. At the time of the Renaissance Rome became pagan once more; the old imperial blood frothed up and swept Christianity away with the greatest onslaught ever directed against it. Ah! those tombs of the popes at St. Peter's, with their impudent, insolent glorification of the departed, their sumptuous, carnal hugeness, defying death and setting immortality upon this earth. There are giant popes of bronze, allegorical figures and angels of equivocal character wearing the beauty of lovely girls, of passion-compelling women with the thighs and the breasts of pagan goddesses! Paul III is seated on a high pedestal, Justice and Prudence are almost prostrate at his feet. Urban VIII is between Prudence and Religion, Innocent XI between Religion and Justice, Innocent XII between Justice and Charity, Gregory XIII between Religion and Strength. Attended by Prudence and Justice, Alexander VII appears kneeling, with Charity and Truth before him, and a skeleton rises up displaying an empty hour-glass. Clement XIII, also on his knees, triumphs above a monumental *sarcophagus*, against which leans Religion bearing the Cross; while the Genius of Death, his elbow resting on the right-hand corner, has two huge, superb lions, emblems of

omnipotence, beneath him. Bronze bespeaks the eternity of the figures, white marble describes opulent flesh, and coloured marble winds around in rich draperies, deifying the monuments under the bright, golden glow of nave and aisles.

And Pierre passed from one tomb to the other on his way through the magnificent, deserted, sunlit basilica. Yes, these tombs, so imperial in their ostentation, were meet companions for those of the Appian Way. Assuredly it was Rome, the soil of Rome, that soil where pride and domination sprouted like the herbage of the fields that had transformed the humble Christianity of primitive times, the religion of fraternity, justice, and hope into what it now was: victorious Catholicism, allied to the rich and powerful, a huge implement of government, prepared for the conquest of every nation. The popes had awoke as Cæsars. Remote heredity had acted, the blood of Augustus had bubbled forth afresh, flowing through their veins and firing their minds with immeasurable ambition. As yet none but Augustus had held the empire of the world, had been both emperor and pontiff, master of the body and the soul. And thence had come the eternal dream of the popes in despair at only holding the spiritual power, and obstinately refusing to yield in temporal matters, clinging for ever to the ancient hope that their dream might at last be realised, and the Vatican become another Palatine, whence they might reign with absolute despotism over all the conquered nations.

VI

PIERRE had been in Rome for a fortnight, and yet the affair of his book was no nearer solution. He was still possessed by an ardent desire to see the Pope, but could in no wise tell how to satisfy it, so frequent were the delays and so greatly had he been frightened by Monsignor Nani's predictions of the dire consequences which might attend any imprudent action. And so, foreseeing a prolonged sojourn, he at last betook himself to the Vicariate in order that his "celebret" might be stamped, and afterwards said his mass each morning at the Church of Santa Brigida, where he received a kindly greeting from Abbé Pisoni, Benedetta's former confessor.

One Monday evening he resolved to repair early to Donna Serafina's customary reception in the hope of learning some news and expediting his affairs. Perhaps Monsignor Nani would look in; perhaps he might be lucky enough to come across some cardinal or domestic prelate willing to help him. It was in vain that he had tried to extract any positive information from Don Vigilio, for, after a short spell of affability and willingness, Cardinal Pio's secretary had relapsed into distrust and fear, and avoided Pierre as if he were resolved not to meddle in a business which, all considered, was decidedly suspicious and dangerous. More-

over, for a couple of days past a violent attack of fever had compelled him to keep his room.

Thus the only person to whom Pierre could turn for comfort was Victorine Bosquet, the old Beauce-ronne servant who had been promoted to the rank of housekeeper, and who still retained a French heart after thirty years' residence in Rome. She often spoke to the young priest of Auneau, her native place, as if she had left it only the previous day; but on that particular Monday even she had lost her wonted gay vivacity, and when she heard that he meant to go down in the evening to see the ladies she wagged her head significantly. "Ah! you won't find them very cheerful," said she. "My poor Benedetta is greatly worried. Her divorce suit is not progressing at all well."

All Rome, indeed, was again talking of this affair. An extraordinary revival of tittle-tattle had set both white and black worlds agog. And so there was no need for reticence on Victorine's part, especially in conversing with a compatriot. It appeared, then, that, in reply to Advocate Morano's memoir setting forth that the marriage had not been consummated, there had come another memoir, a terrible one, emanating from Monsignor Palma, a doctor in theology, whom the Congregation of the Council had selected to defend the marriage. As a first point, Monsignor Palma flatly disputed the alleged non-consummation, questioned the certificate put forward on Benedetta's behalf, and quoted instances recorded in scientific text-books which showed how deceptive appearances often were. He strongly insisted, moreover, on the narrative which Count Prada supplied in another

memoir, a narrative well calculated to inspire doubt; and, further, he so turned and twisted the evidence of Benedetta's own maid as to make that evidence also serve against her. Finally he argued in a decisive way that, even supposing the marriage had not been consummated, this could only be ascribed to the resistance of the Countess, who had thus set at defiance one of the elementary laws of married life, which was that a wife owed obedience to her husband.

Next had come a fourth memoir, drawn up by the reporter of the Congregation, who analysed and discussed the three others, and subsequently the Congregation itself had dealt with the matter, opining in favour of the dissolution of the marriage by a majority of one vote — such a bare majority, indeed, that Monsignor Palma, exercising his rights, had hastened to demand further inquiry, a course which brought the whole *procédure* again into question, and rendered a fresh vote necessary.

“Ah! the poor Contessina!” exclaimed Victorine, “she'll surely die of grief, for, calm as she may seem, there's an inward fire consuming her. It seems that Monsignor Palma is the master of the situation, and can make the affair drag on as long as he likes. And then a deal of money had already been spent, and one will have to spend a lot more. Abbé Pisoni, whom you know, was very badly inspired when he helped on that marriage; and though I certainly don't want to soil the memory of my good mistress, Countess Ernesta, who was a real saint, it's none the less true that she wrecked her daughter's life when she gave her to Count Prada.”

The housekeeper paused. Then, impelled by an instinctive sense of justice, she resumed. "It's only natural that Count Prada should be annoyed, for he's really being made a fool of. And, for my part, as there is no end to all the fuss, and this divorce is so hard to obtain, I really don't see why the Contessina shouldn't live with her Dario without troubling any further. Haven't they loved one another ever since they were children? Aren't they both young and handsome, and wouldn't they be happy together, whatever the world might say? Happiness, *mon Dieu!* one finds it so seldom that one can't afford to let it pass."

Then, seeing how greatly surprised Pierre was at hearing such language, she began to laugh with the quiet composure of one belonging to the humble classes of France, whose only desire is a quiet and happy life, irrespective of matrimonial ties. Next, in more discreet language, she proceeded to lament another worry which had fallen on the household, another result of the divorce affair. A rupture had come about between Donna Serafina and Advocate Morano, who was very displeased with the ill success of his memoir to the congregation, and accused Father Lorenza — the confessor of the Boccanera ladies — of having urged them into a deplorable lawsuit, whose only fruit could be a wretched scandal affecting everybody. And so great had been Morano's annoyance that he had not returned to the Boccanera mansion, but had severed a connection of thirty years' standing, to the stupefaction of all the Roman drawing-rooms, which altogether disapproved of his conduct. Donna Serafina was, for her part, the

more grieved as she suspected the advocate of having purposely picked the quarrel in order to secure an excuse for leaving her ; his real motive, in her estimation, being a sudden, disgraceful passion for a young and intriguing woman of the middle classes.

That Monday evening, when Pierre entered the drawing-room, hung with yellow brocatelle of a flowery Louis XIV pattern, he at once realised that melancholy reigned in the dim light radiating from the lace-veiled lamps. Benedetta and Celia, seated on a sofa, were chatting with Dario, whilst Cardinal Sarno, ensconced in an arm-chair, listened to the ceaseless chatter of the old relative who conducted the little Princess to each Monday gathering. And the only other person present was Donna Serafina, seated all alone in her wonted place on the right-hand side of the chimney-piece, and consumed with secret rage at seeing the chair on the left-hand side unoccupied — that chair which Morano had always taken during the thirty years that he had been faithful to her. Pierre noticed with what anxious and then despairing eyes she observed his entrance, her glance ever straying towards the door, as though she even yet hoped for the fickle one's return. Withal her bearing was erect and proud ; she seemed to be more tightly laced than ever ; and there was all the wonted haughtiness on her hard-featured face, with its jet-black eyebrows and snowy hair.

Pierre had no sooner paid his respects to her than he allowed his own worry to appear by inquiring whether they would not have the pleasure of seeing Monsignor Nani that evening. Thereupon Donna

Serafina could not refrain from answering: "Oh! Monsignor Nani is forsaking us like the others. People always take themselves off when they can be of service."

She harboured a spite against the prelate for having done so little to further the divorce in spite of his many promises. Beneath his outward show of extreme willingness and caressing affability he doubtless concealed some scheme of his own which he was tenaciously pursuing. However, Donna Serafina promptly regretted the confession which anger had wrung from her, and resumed: "After all, he will perhaps come. He is so good-natured, and so fond of us."

In spite of the vivacity of her temperament she really wished to act diplomatically, so as to overcome the bad luck which had recently set in. Her brother the Cardinal had told her how irritated he was by the attitude of the Congregation of the Council; he had little doubt that the frigid reception accorded to his niece's suit had been due in part to the desire of some of his brother cardinals to be disagreeable to him. Personally, he desired the divorce, as it seemed to him the only means of ensuring the perpetuation of the family; for Dario obstinately refused to marry any other woman than his cousin. And thus there was an accumulation of disasters; the Cardinal was wounded in his pride, his sister shared his sufferings and on her own side was stricken in the heart, whilst both lovers were plunged in despair at finding their hopes yet again deferred.

As Pierre approached the sofa where the young folks were chatting he found that they were speaking of the

catastrophe. "Why should you be so despondent?" asked Celia in an undertone. "After all, there was a majority of a vote in favour of annulling the marriage. Your suit hasn't been rejected; there is only a delay."

But Benedetta shook her head. "No, no! If Monsignor Palma proves obstinate his Holiness will never consent. It's all over."

"Ah! if one were only rich, very rich!" murmured Dario, with such an air of conviction that no one smiled. And, turning to his cousin, he added in a whisper: "I must really have a talk with you. We cannot go on living like this."

In a breath she responded: "Yes, you are right. Come down to-morrow evening at five. I will be here alone."

Then dreariness set in; the evening seemed to have no end. Pierre was greatly touched by the evident despair of Benedetta, who as a rule was so calm and sensible. The deep eyes which illumined her pure, delicate, infantile face were now blurred as by restrained tears. He had already formed a sincere affection for her, pleased as he was with her equable if somewhat indolent disposition, the semblance of discreet good sense with which she veiled her soul of fire. That Monday even she certainly tried to smile while listening to the pretty secrets confided to her by Celia, whose love affairs were prospering far more than her own. There was only one brief interval of general conversation, and that was brought about by the little Princess's aunt, who, suddenly raising her voice, began to speak of the infamous manner in which the Italian newspapers referred to the Holy Father. Never, in-

deed, had there been so much bad feeling between the Vatican and the Quirinal. Cardinal Sarno felt so strongly on the subject that he departed from his wonted silence to announce that on the occasion of the sacrilegious festivities of the Twentieth of September, celebrating the capture of Rome, the Pope intended to cast a fresh letter of protest in the face of all the Christian powers, whose indifference proved their complicity in the odious spoliation of the Church.

“Yes, indeed! what folly to try and marry the Pope and the King,” bitterly exclaimed Donna Serafina, alluding to her niece’s deplorable marriage.

The old maid now seemed quite beside herself; it was already so late that neither Monsignor Nani nor anybody else was expected. However, at the unhoped-for sound of footsteps her eyes again brightened and turned feverishly towards the door. But it was only to encounter a final disappointment. The visitor proved to be Narcisse Habert, who stepped up to her, apologising for making so late a call. It was Cardinal Sarno, his uncle by marriage, who had introduced him into this exclusive *salon*, where he had received a cordial reception on account of his religious views, which were said to be most uncompromising. If, however, despite the lateness of the hour, he had ventured to call there that evening, it was solely on account of Pierre, whom he at once drew on one side.

“I felt sure I should find you here,” he said. “Just now I managed to see my cousin, Monsignor Gamba del Zoppo, and I have some good news for you. He will see us to-morrow at about eleven in his rooms at the Vatican.” Then, lowering his voice: “I think he will

endeavour to conduct you to the Holy Father. Briefly, the audience seems to me assured."

Pierre was greatly delighted by this promised certainty, which came to him so suddenly in that dreary drawing-room, where for a couple of hours he had been gradually sinking into despair! So at last a solution was at hand!

Meantime Narcisse, after shaking hands with Dario and bowing to Benedetta and C'elia, approached his uncle the Cardinal, who, having rid himself of the old relation, made up his mind to talk. But his conversation was confined to the state of his health, and the weather, and sundry insignificant anecdotes which he had lately heard. Not a word escaped him respecting the thousand complicated matters with which he dealt at the Propaganda. It was as though, once outside his office, he plunged into the commonplace and the unimportant by way of resting from the anxious task of governing the world. And after he had spoken for a time every one got up, and the visitors took leave.

"Don't forget," Narcisse repeated to Pierre, "you will find me at the Sixtine Chapel to-morrow at ten. And I will show you the Botticellis before we go to our appointment."

At half-past nine on the following morning Pierre, who had come on foot, was already on the spacious Piazza of St. Peter's; and before turning to the right, towards the bronze gate near one corner of Bernini's colonnade, he raised his eyes and lingered, gazing at the Vatican. Nothing to his mind could be less monumental than the jumble of buildings which, without

semblance of architectural order or regularity of any kind, had grown up in the shadow cast by the dome of the basilica. Roofs rose one above the other and broad, flat walls stretched out chance-wise, just as wings and storeys had been added. The only symmetry observable above the colonnade was that of the three sides of the court of San Damaso, where the lofty glass-work which now encloses the old *loggie* sparkled in the sun between the ruddy columns and pilasters, suggesting, as it were, three huge conservatories.

And this was the most beautiful palace in the world, the largest of all palaces, comprising no fewer than eleven thousand apartments and containing the most admirable masterpieces of human genius! But Pierre, disillusioned as he was, had eyes only for the lofty façade on the right, overlooking the piazza, for he knew that the second-floor windows there were those of the Pope's private apartments. And he contemplated those windows for a long time, and remembered having been told that the fifth one on the right was that of the Pope's bed-room, and that a lamp could always be seen burning there far into the night.

What was there, too, behind that gate of bronze which he saw before him—that sacred portal by which all the kingdoms of the world communicated with the kingdom of heaven, whose august vicar had secluded himself behind those lofty, silent walls? From where he stood Pierre gazed on that gate with its metal panels studded with large square-headed nails, and wondered what it defended, what it concealed, what it shut off from the view, with its stern,

forbidding air, recalling that of the gate of some ancient fortress. What kind of world would he find behind it, what treasures of human charity jealously preserved in yonder gloom, what revivifying hope for the new nations hungering for fraternity and justice? He took pleasure in fancying, in picturing the one holy pastor of humanity, ever watching in the depths of that closed palace, and, while the nations strayed into hatred, preparing all for the final reign of Jesus, and at last proclaiming the advent of that reign by transforming our democracies into the one great Christian community promised by the Saviour. Assuredly the world's future was being prepared behind that bronze portal; assuredly it was that future which would issue forth.

But all at once Pierre was amazed to find himself face to face with Monsignor Nani, who had just left the Vatican on his way to the neighbouring Palace of the Inquisition, where, as Assessor, he had his residence.

"Ah! Monsignor," said Pierre, "I am very pleased. My friend Monsieur Habert is going to present me to his cousin, Monsignor Gamba del Zoppo, and I think I shall obtain the audience I so greatly desire."

Monsignor Nani smiled with his usual amiable yet keen expression. "Yes, yes, I know." But, correcting himself as it were, he added: "I share your satisfaction, my dear son. Only, you must be prudent." And then, as if fearing that the young priest might have understood by his first words that he had just seen Monsignor Gamba, the most easily terrified prelate of the whole prudent pontifical family, he related

that he had been running about since an early hour on behalf of two French ladies, who likewise were dying of a desire to see the Pope. However, he greatly feared that the help he was giving them would not prove successful.

"I will confess to you, Monsignor," replied Pierre, "that I myself was getting very discouraged. Yes, it is high time I should find a little comfort, for my sojourn here is hardly calculated to brace my soul."

He went on in this strain, allowing it to be seen that the sights of Rome were finally destroying his faith. Such days as those which he had spent on the Palatine and along the Appian Way, in the Catacombs and at St. Peter's, grievously disturbed him, spoilt his dream of Christianity rejuvenated and triumphant. He emerged from them full of doubt and growing lassitude, having already lost much of his usually rebellious enthusiasm.

Still smiling, Monsignor Nani listened and nodded approvingly. Yes, no doubt that was the fatal result. He seemed to have foreseen it, and to be well satisfied thereat. "At all events, my dear son," said he, "everything is going on well, since you are now certain that you will see his Holiness."

"That is true, Monsignor; I have placed my only hope in the very just and perspicacious Leo XIII. He alone can judge me, since he alone can recognise in my book his own ideas, which I think I have very faithfully set forth. Ah! if he be willing he will, in Jesus' name and by democracy and science, save this old world of ours!"

Pierre's enthusiasm was returning again, and Nani,

smiling more and more affably with his piercing eyes and thin lips, again expressed approval: "Certainly; quite so, my dear son. You will speak to him, you will see."

Then as they both raised their heads and looked towards the Vatican, Nani carried his amiability so far as to undeceive Pierre with respect to the Pope's bed-room. No, the window where a light was seen every evening was simply that of a landing where the gas was kept burning almost all night. The window of his Holiness's bed-chamber was the second one farther on. Then both relapsed into silence, equally grave as they continued to gaze at the façade.

"Well, till we meet again, my dear son," said Nani at last. "You will tell me of your interview, I hope."

As soon as Pierre was alone he went in by the bronze portal, his heart beating violently, as if he were entering some redoubtable sanctuary where the future happiness of mankind was elaborated. A sentry was on duty there, a Swiss guard, who walked slowly up and down in a grey-blue cloak, below which one only caught a glimpse of his baggy red, black, and yellow breeches; and it seemed as if this cloak of sober hue were purposely cast over a disguise in order to conceal its strangeness, which had become irksome. Then, on the right-hand, came the covered stairway conducting to the Court of San Damaso: but to reach the Sistine Chapel it was necessary to follow a long gallery, with columns on either hand, and ascend the royal staircase, the Scala Regia. And in this realm of the gigantic, where every dimension is exaggerated

and replete with overpowering majesty, Pierre's breath came short as he ascended the broad steps.

He was much surprised on entering the Sixtine Chapel, for it at first seemed to him small, a sort of rectangular and lofty hall, with a delicate screen of white marble separating the part where guests congregate on the occasion of great ceremonies from the choir where the cardinals sit on simple oaken benches, while the inferior prelates remain standing behind them. On a low platform to the right of the soberly adorned altar is the pontifical throne; while in the wall on the left opens the narrow singing gallery with its balcony of marble. And for everything suddenly to spread out and soar into the infinite one must raise one's head, allow one's eyes to ascend from the huge fresco of the Last Judgment, occupying the whole of the end wall, to the paintings which cover the vaulted ceiling down to the cornice extending between the twelve windows of white glass, six on either hand.

Fortunately there were only three or four quiet tourists there; and Pierre at once perceived Narcisse Habert occupying one of the cardinals' seats above the steps where the train-bearers crouch. Motionless, and with his head somewhat thrown back, the young man seemed to be in ecstasy. But it was not the work of Michael Angelo that he thus contemplated. His eyes never strayed from one of the earlier frescoes below the cornice; and on recognising the priest he contented himself with murmuring: "Ah! my friend, just look at the Botticelli." Then, with dreamy eyes, he relapsed into a state of rapture.

Pierre, for his part, had received a great shock both

in heart and in mind, overpowered as he was by the superhuman genius of Michael Angelo. The rest vanished; there only remained, up yonder, as in a limitless heaven, the extraordinary creations of the master's art. That which at first surprised one was that the painter should have been the sole artisan of the mighty work. No marble cutters, no bronze workers, no gilders, no one of another calling had intervened. The painter with his brush had sufficed for all — for the pilasters, columns, and cornices of marble, for the statues and the ornaments of bronze, for the *fleurons* and roses of gold, for the whole of the wondrously rich decorative work which surrounded the frescoes. And Pierre imagined Michael Angelo on the day when the bare vault was handed over to him, covered with plaster, offering only a flat white surface, hundreds of square yards to be adorned. And he pictured him face to face with that huge white page, refusing all help, driving all inquisitive folks away, jealously, violently shutting himself up alone with his gigantic task, spending four and a half years in fierce solitude, and day by day adding to his colossal work of creation. Ah! that mighty work, a task to fill a whole lifetime, a task which he must have begun with quiet confidence in his own will and power, drawing, as it were, an entire world from his brain and flinging it there with the ceaseless flow of creative virility in the full heyday of its omnipotence.

And Pierre was yet more overcome when he began to examine these presentments of humanity, magnified as by the eyes of a visionary, overflowing in mighty sympathetic pages of cyclopean symbolisa-

tion. Royal grace and nobility, sovereign peacefulness and power — every beauty shone out like natural florescence. And there was perfect science, the most audacious foreshortening risked with the certainty of success — an everlasting triumph of technique over the difficulty which an arched surface presented. And, in particular, there was wonderful simplicity of medium; matter was reduced almost to nothingness; a few colours were used broadly without any studied search for effect or brilliancy. Yet that sufficed, the blood seethed freely, the muscles projected, the figures became animated and stood out of their frames with such energy and dash that it seemed as if a flame were flashing by aloft, endowing all those beings with superhuman and immortal life. Life, aye, it was life, which burst forth and triumphed — mighty, swarming life, miraculous life, the creation of one sole hand possessed of the supreme gift — simplicity blended with power.

That a philosophical system, a record of the whole of human destiny, should have been found therein, with the creation of the world, of man, and of woman, the fall, the chastisement, then the redemption, and finally God's judgment on the last day — this was a matter on which Pierre was unable to dwell, at this first visit, in the wondering stupor into which the paintings threw him. But he could not help noticing how the human body, its beauty, its power, and its grace were exalted! Ah! that regal Jehovah, at once terrible and paternal, carried off amid the whirlwind of his creation, his arms outstretched and giving birth to worlds! And that superb and nobly outlined Adam,

with extended hand, whom Jehovah, though he touch him not, animates with his finger—a wondrous and admirable gesture, leaving a sacred space between the finger of the Creator and that of the created—a tiny space, in which, nevertheless, abides all the infinite of the invisible and the mysterious. And then that powerful yet adorable Eve, that Eve with the sturdy flanks fit for the bearing of humanity, that Eve with the proud, tender grace of a woman bent on being loved even to perdition, that Eve embodying the whole of woman with her fecundity, her seductiveness, her empire! Moreover, even the decorative figures of the pilasters at the corners of the frescoes celebrate the triumph of the flesh: there are the twenty young men radiant in their nakedness, with incomparable splendour of torso and of limb, and such intensity of life that a craze for motion seems to carry them off, bend them, throw them over in superb attitudes. And between the windows are the giants, the prophets and the sibyls—man and woman deified, with inordinate wealth of muscle and grandeur of intellectual expression. There is Jeremiah with his elbow resting on his knee and his chin on his hand, plunged as he is in reflection—in the very depths of his visions and his dreams; there is the Sibylla Erithrea, so pure of profile, so young despite the opulence of her form, and with one finger resting on the open book of destiny; there is Isaiah with the thick lips of truth, virile and haughty, his head half turned and his hand raised with a gesture of command; there is the Sibylla Cumæa, terrifying with her science and her old age, her wrinkled countenance, her vulture's

nose, her square protruding chin; there is Jonah cast forth by the whale, and wondrously foreshortened, his torso twisted, his arms bent, his head thrown back, and his mouth agape and shouting: and there are the others, all of the same full-blown, majestic family, reigning with the sovereignty of eternal health and intelligence, and typifying the dream of a broader, loftier, and indestructible humanity. Moreover, in the lunettes and the arches over the windows other figures of grace, power, and beauty appear and throng, the ancestors of the Christ, thoughtful mothers with lovely nude infants, men with wondering eyes peering into the future, representatives of the punished weary race longing for the promised Redeemer; while in the pendentives of the four corners various biblical episodes, the victories of Israel over the Spirit of Evil, spring into life. And finally there is the gigantic fresco at the far end, the Last Judgment with its swarming multitude, so numerous that days and days are needed to see each figure aright, a distracted crowd, full of the hot breath of life, from the dead rising in response to the furious trumpeting of the angels, from the fearsome groups of the damned whom the demons fling into hell, even to Jesus the justiciar, surrounded by the saints and apostles, and to the radiant concourse of the blessed who ascend upheld by angels, whilst higher and still higher other angels, bearing the instruments of the Passion, triumph as in full glory. And yet, above this gigantic composition, painted thirty years subsequently, in the full ripeness of age, the ceiling retains its ethereality, its unquestionable superiority, for on it the artist bestowed all

his virgin power, his whole youth, the first great flare of his genius.

And Pierre found but one word to express his feelings: Michael Angelo was the monster dominating and crushing all others. Beneath his immense achievement you had only to glance at the works of Perugino, Pinturicchio, Roselli, Signorelli, and Botticelli, those earlier frescoes, admirable in their way, which below the cornice spread out around the chapel.

Narcisse for his part had not raised his eyes to the overpowering splendour of the ceiling. Wrapt in ecstasy, he did not allow his gaze to stray from one of the three frescoes of Botticelli. "Ah! Botticelli," he at last murmured; "in him you have the elegance and the grace of the mysterious; a profound feeling of sadness even in the midst of voluptuousness, a divination of the whole modern soul, with the most troublous charm that ever attended artist's work."

Pierre glanced at him in amazement, and then ventured to inquire: "You come here to see the Botticellis?"

"Yes, certainly," the young man quietly replied; "I only come here for him, and five hours every week I only look at his work. There, just study that fresco, Moses and the daughters of Jethro. Isn't it the most penetrating work that human tenderness and melancholy have produced?"

Then, with a faint, devout quiver in his voice and the air of a priest initiating another into the delightful but perturbing atmosphere of a sanctuary, he went on repeating the praises of Botticelli's art; his women with long, sensual, yet candid faces, supple bearing,

and rounded forms showing from under light drapery ; his young men, his angels of doubtful sex, blending stateliness of muscle with infinite delicacy of outline ; next the mouths he painted, fleshy, fruit-like mouths, at times suggesting irony, at others pain, and often so enigmatical with their sinuous curves that one knew not whether the words they left unuttered were words of purity or filth ; then, too, the eyes which he bestowed on his figures, eyes of languor and passion, of carnal or mystical rapture, their joy at times so instinct with grief as they peer into the nihility of human things that no eyes in the world could be more impenetrable. And finally there were Botticelli's hands, so carefully and delicately painted, so full of life, wantoning so to say in a free atmosphere, now joining, caressing, and even, as it were, speaking, the whole evincing such intense solicitude for gracefulness that at times there seems to be undue mannerism, though every hand has its particular expression, each varying expression of the enjoyment or pain which the sense of touch can bring. And yet there was nothing effeminate or false about the painter's work : on all sides a sort of virile pride was apparent, an atmosphere of superb passionate motion, absolute concern for truth, direct study from life, conscientiousness, veritable realism, corrected and elevated by a genial strangeness of feeling and character that imparted a never-to-be-forgotten charm even to ugliness itself.

Pierre's stupefaction, however, increased as he listened to Narcisse, whose somewhat studied elegance, whose curly hair cut in the Florentine fashion, and

whose blue, mauvish eyes paling with enthusiasm he now for the first time remarked. "Botticelli," he at last said, "was no doubt a marvellous artist, only it seems to me that here, at any rate, Michael Angelo —"

But Narcisse interrupted him almost with violence. "No! no! Don't talk of him! He spoilt everything. ruined everything! A man who harnessed himself to his work like an ox, who laboured at his task like a navvy, at the rate of so many square yards a day! And a man, too, with no sense of the mysterious and the unknown, who saw everything so huge as to disgust one with beauty, painting girls like the trunks of oak-trees, women like giant butchers, with heaps and heaps of stupid flesh, and never a gleam of a divine or infernal soul! He was a mason — a colossal mason, if you like — but he was nothing more."

Weary "modern" that Narcisse was, spoilt by the pursuit of the original and the rare, he thus unconsciously gave rein to his fated hate of health and power. That Michael Angelo who brought forth without an effort, who had left behind him the most prodigious of all artistic creations, was the enemy. And his crime precisely was that he had created life, produced life in such excess that all the petty creations of others, even the most delightful among them, vanished in presence of the overflowing torrent of human beings flung there all alive in the sunlight.

"Well, for my part," Pierre courageously declared, "I'm not of your opinion. I now realise that life is everything in art; that real immortality belongs only to those who create. The case of Michael Angelo

seems to me decisive, for he is the superhuman master, the monster who overwhelms all others, precisely because he brought forth that magnificent living flesh which offends your sense of delicacy. Those who are inclined to the curious, those who have minds of a pretty turn, whose intellects are ever seeking to penetrate things, may try to improve on the equivocal and invisible, and set all the charm of art in some elaborate stroke or symbolisation; but, none the less, Michael Angelo remains the all-powerful, the maker of men, the master of clearness, simplicity, and health."

At this Narcisse smiled with indulgent and courteous disdain. And he anticipated further argument by remarking: "It's already eleven. My cousin was to have sent a servant here as soon as he could receive us. I am surprised to have seen nobody as yet. Shall we go up to see the *stanze* of Raffaelle while we wait?"

Once in the rooms above, he showed himself perfect, both lucid in his remarks and just in his appreciations, having recovered all his easy intelligence as soon as he was no longer upset by his hatred of colossal labour and cheerful decoration.

It was unfortunate that Pierre should have first visited the Sixtine Chapel; for it was necessary he should forget what he had just seen and accustom himself to what he now beheld in order to enjoy its pure beauty. It was as if some potent wine had confused him, and prevented any immediate relish of a lighter vintage of delicate fragrance. Admiration did not here fall upon one with lightning speed; it was

slowly, irresistibly that one grew charmed. And the contrast was like that of Racine beside Corneille, Lamartine beside Hugo, the eternal pair, the masculine and feminine genius coupled through centuries of glory. With Raffaelle it is nobility, grace, exquisiteness, and correctness of line, and divineness of harmony that triumph. You do not find in him merely the materialist symbolism so superbly thrown off by Michael Angelo; he introduces psychological analysis of deep penetration into the painter's art. Man is shown more purified, idealised; one sees more of that which is within him. And though one may be in presence of an artist of sentimental bent, a feminine genius whose quiver of tenderness one can feel, it is also certain that admirable firmness of workmanship confronts one, that the whole is very strong and very great. Pierre gradually yielded to such sovereign masterliness, such virile elegance, such a vision of supreme beauty set in supreme perfection. But if the "Dispute on the Sacrament" and the so-called "School of Athens," both prior to the paintings of the Sistine Chapel, seemed to him to be Raffaelle's masterpieces, he felt that in the "Burning of the Borgo," and particularly in the "Expulsion of Heliodorus from the Temple," and "Pope St. Leo staying Attila at the Gates of Rome," the artist had lost the flower of his divine grace, through the deep impression which the overwhelming grandeur of Michael Angelo had wrought upon him. How crushing indeed had been the blow when the Sistine Chapel was thrown open and the rivals entered! The creations of the monster then appeared, and the greatest of the humanisers

lost some of his soul at sight of them, thenceforward unable to rid himself of their influence.

From the *stanze* Narcisse took Pierre to the *loggie*, those glazed galleries which are so high and so delicately decorated. But here you only find work which pupils executed after designs left by Raffaello at his death. The fall was sudden and complete, and never had Pierre better understood that genius is everything—that when it disappears the school collapses. The man of genius sums up his period; at a given hour he throws forth all the sap of the social soil, which afterwards remains exhausted often for centuries. So Pierre became more particularly interested in the fine view that the *loggie* afford, and all at once he noticed that the papal apartments were in front of him, just across the Court of San Damaso. This court, with its porticus, fountain, and white pavement, had an aspect of empty, airy, sunlit solemnity which surprised him. There was none of the gloom or pent-up religious mystery that he had dreamt of with his mind full of the surroundings of the old northern cathedrals. Right and left of the steps conducting to the rooms of the Pope and the Cardinal Secretary of State four or five carriages were ranged, the coachmen stiffly erect and the horses motionless in the brilliant light; and nothing else peopled that vast square desert of a court which, with its bareness gilded by the coruscations of its glass-work and the ruddiness of its stones, suggested a pagan temple dedicated to the sun. But what more particularly struck Pierre was the splendid panorama of Rome, for he had not hitherto imagined that the Pope from his windows could thus behold the entire

city spread out before him as if he merely had to stretch forth his hand to make it his own once more.

While Pierre contemplated the scene a sound of voices caused him to turn; and he perceived a servant in black livery who, after repeating a message to Narcisse, was retiring with a deep bow. Looking much annoyed, the *attaché* approached the young priest. "Monsignor Gamba del Zoppo," said he, "has sent word that he can't see us this morning. Some unexpected duties require his presence." However, Narcisse's embarrassment showed that he did not believe in the excuse, but rather suspected some one of having so terrified his cousin that the latter was afraid of compromising himself. Obliging and courageous as Habert himself was, this made him indignant. Still he smiled and resumed: "Listen, perhaps there's a means of forcing an entry. If your time is your own we can lunch together and then return to visit the Museum of Antiquities. I shall certainly end by coming across my cousin and we may, perhaps, be lucky enough to meet the Pope should he go down to the gardens."

At the news that his audience was yet again postponed Pierre had felt keenly disappointed. However, as the whole day was at his disposal, he willingly accepted the *attaché*'s offer. They lunched in front of St. Peter's, in a little restaurant of the Borgo, most of whose customers were pilgrims, and the fare, as it happened, was far from good. Then at about two o'clock they set off for the museum, skirting the basilica by way of the Piazza della Sagrestia. It was a bright, deserted, burning district; and again, but in

a far greater degree, did the young priest experience that sensation of bare, tawny, sun-baked majesty which had come upon him while gazing into the Court of San Damaso. Then, as he passed the apse of St. Peter's, the enormity of the colossus was brought home to him more strongly than ever: it rose like a giant bouquet of architecture edged by empty expanses of pavement sprinkled with fine weeds. And in all the silent immensity there were only two children playing in the shadow of a wall. The old papal mint, the Zecca, now an Italian possession, and guarded by soldiers of the royal army, is on the left of the passage leading to the museums, while on the right, just in front, is one of the entrances of honour to the Vatican where the papal Swiss Guard keeps watch and ward; and this is the entrance by which, according to etiquette, the pair-horse carriages convey the Pope's visitors into the Court of San Damaso.

Following the long lane which ascends between a wing of the palace and its garden wall, Narcisse and Pierre at last reached the Museum of Antiquities. Ah! what a museum it is, with galleries innumerable, a museum compounded of three museums, the Pio-Clementino, Chiaramonti, and the Braccio-Nuovo, and containing a whole world found beneath the soil, then exhumed, and now glorified in full sunlight. For more than two hours Pierre went from one hall to another, dazzled by the masterpieces, bewildered by the accumulation of genius and beauty. It was not only the celebrated examples of statuary, the Laocoon and the Apollo of the cabinets of the Belvedere, the Meleager, or even the torso of Hercules — that aston-

ished him. He was yet more impressed by the *ensemble*, by the innumerable quantities of Venuses, Bacchuses, and deified emperors and empresses, by the whole superb growth of beautiful or August flesh celebrating the immortality of life. Three days previously he had visited the Museum of the Capitol, where he had admired the Venus, the Dying Gaul,¹ the marvellous Centaurs of black marble, and the extraordinary collection of busts, but here his admiration became intensified into stupor by the inexhaustible wealth of the galleries. And, with more curiosity for life than for art, perhaps, he again lingered before the busts which so powerfully resuscitate the Rome of history — the Rome which, whilst incapable of realising the ideal beauty of Greece, was certainly well able to create life. The emperors, the philosophers, the learned men, the poets are all there, and live such as they really were, studied and portrayed in all scrupulousness with their deformities, their blemishes, the slightest peculiarities of their features. And from this extreme solicitude for truth springs a wonderful wealth of character and an incomparable vision of the past. Nothing, indeed, could be loftier: the very men live once more, and retrace the history of their city, that history which has been so falsified that the teaching of it has caused generations of school-boys to hold antiquity in horror. But on seeing the men, how well one understands, how fully one can sympathise! And indeed the smallest bits of marble, the maimed statues, the bas-reliefs in frag-

¹ Best known in England, through Byron's lines, as the Dying Gladiator, though that appellation is certainly erroneous. — *Trans.*

ments, even the isolated limbs — whether the divine arm of a nymph or the sinewy, shaggy thigh of a satyr — evoke the splendour of a civilisation full of light, grandeur, and strength.

At last Narcisse brought Pierre back into the Gallery of the Candelabra, three hundred feet in length and full of fine examples of sculpture. "Listen, my dear Abbé," said he. "It is scarcely more than four o'clock, and we will sit down here for a while, as I am told that the Holy Father sometimes passes this way to go down to the gardens. It would be really lucky if you could see him, perhaps even speak to him — who can tell? At all events, it will rest you, for you must be tired out."

Narcisse was known to all the attendants, and his relationship to Monsignor Gamba gave him the run of almost the entire Vatican, where he was fond of spending his leisure time. Finding two chairs, they sat down, and the *attaché* again began to talk of art.

How astonishing had been the destiny of Rome, what a singular, borrowed royalty had been hers! She seemed like a centre whither the whole world converged, but where nothing grew from the soil itself, which from the outset appeared to be stricken with sterility. The arts required to be acclimatised there; it was necessary to transplant the genius of neighbouring nations, which, once there, however, flourished magnificently. Under the emperors, when Rome was the queen of the earth, the beauty of her monuments and sculpture came to her from Greece. Later, when Christianity arose in Rome, it there remained impregnated with paganism; it was on another soil that it

produced Gothic art, the Christian art *par excellence*. Later still, at the Renaissance, it was certainly at Rome that the age of Julius II and Leo X shone forth; but the artists of Tuscany and Umbria prepared the evolution, brought it to Rome that it might thence expand and soar. For the second time, indeed, art came to Rome from without, and gave her the royalty of the world by blossoming so triumphantly within her walls. Then occurred the extraordinary awakening of antiquity, Apollo and Venus resuscitated worshipped by the popes themselves, who from the time of Nicholas V dreamt of making papal Rome the equal of the imperial city. After the precursors, so sincere, tender, and strong in their art — Fra Angelico, Perugino, Botticelli, and so many others — came the two sovereigns, Michael Angelo and Raffaele, the superhuman and the divine. Then the fall was sudden, years elapsed before the advent of Caravaggio with power of colour and modelling, all that the science of painting could achieve when bereft of genius. And afterwards the decline continued until Bernini was reached — Bernini, the real creator of the Rome of the present popes, the prodigal child who at twenty could already show a galaxy of colossal marble wenches, the universal architect who with fearful activity finished the façade, built the colonnade, decorated the interior of St. Peter's, and raised fountains, churches, and palaces innumerable. And that was the end of all, for since then Rome has little by little withdrawn from life, from the modern world, as though she, who always lived on what she derived from others, were dying of her inability to take anything more from them in order to convert it to her own glory.

“Ah! Bernini, that delightful Bernini!” continued Narcisse with his rapturous air. “He is both powerful and exquisite, his *verve* always ready, his ingenuity invariably awake, his fecundity full of grace and magnificence. As for their Bramante with his masterpiece, that cold, correct Cancellaria, we’ll dub him the Michael Angelo and Raffaele of architecture and say no more about it. But Bernini, that exquisite Bernini, why, there is more delicacy and refinement in his pretended bad taste than in all the hugeness and perfection of the others! Our own age ought to recognise itself in his art, at once so varied and so deep, so triumphant in its mannerisms, so full of a perturbing solicitude for the artificial and so free from the baseness of reality. Just go to the Villa Borghese to see the group of Apollo and Daphne which Bernini executed when he was eighteen,¹ and in particular see his statue of Santa Teresa in ecstacy at Santa Maria della Vittoria! Ah! that Santa Teresa! It is like heaven opening, with the quiver that only a purely divine enjoyment can set in woman’s flesh, the rapture of faith carried to the point of spasm, the creature losing breath and dying of pleasure in the arms of the Divinity! I have spent hours and hours before that work without exhausting the infinite scope of its precious, burning symbolisation.”

Narcisse’s voice died away, and Pierre, no longer astonished at his covert, unconscious hatred of health,

¹ There is also at the Villa Borghese Bernini’s *Anchises carried by Æneas*, which he sculptured when only sixteen. No doubt his faults were many; but it was his misfortune to belong to a decadent period. — *Trans.*

simplicity, and strength, scarcely listened to him. The young priest himself was again becoming absorbed in the idea he had formed of pagan Rome resuscitating in Christian Rome and turning it into Catholic Rome, the new political, sacerdotal, domineering centre of earthly government. Apart from the primitive age of the Catacombs, had Rome ever been Christian? The thoughts that had come to him on the Palatine, in the Appian Way, and in St. Peter's were gathering confirmation. Genius that morning had brought him fresh proof. No doubt the paganism which reappeared in the art of Michael Angelo and Raffaele was tempered, transformed by the Christian spirit. But did it not still remain the basis? Had not the former master peered across Olympus when snatching his great nudities from the terrible heavens of Jehovah? Did not the ideal figures of Raffaele reveal the superb, fascinating flesh of Venus beneath the chaste veil of the Virgin? It seemed so to Pierre, and some embarrassment mingled with his despondency, for all those beautiful forms glorifying the ardent passions of life, were in opposition to his dream of rejuvenated Christianity giving peace to the world and reviving the simplicity and purity of the early ages.

All at once he was surprised to hear Narcisse, by what transition he could not tell, speaking to him of the daily life of Leo XIII. "Yes, my dear Abbé, at eighty-four¹ the Holy Father shows the activity of a young man and leads a life of determination and hard

¹The reader should remember that the period selected for this narrative is the year 1894. Leo XIII was born in 1810.—*Trans.*

work such as neither you nor I would care for! At six o'clock he is already up, says his mass in his private chapel, and drinks a little milk for breakfast. Then, from eight o'clock till noon, there is a ceaseless procession of cardinals and prelates, all the affairs of the congregations passing under his eyes, and none could be more numerous or intricate. At noon the public and collective audiences usually begin. At two he dines. Then comes the siesta which he has well earned, or else a promenade in the gardens until six o'clock. The private audiences then sometimes keep him for an hour or two. He sups at nine and scarcely eats, lives on nothing, in fact, and is always alone at his little table. What do you think, eh, of the etiquette which compels him to such loneliness? There you have a man who for eighteen years has never had a guest at his table, who day by day sits all alone in his grandeur! And as soon as ten o'clock strikes, after saying the Rosary with his familiars, he shuts himself up in his room. But, although he may go to bed, he sleeps very little; he is frequently troubled by insomnia, and gets up and sends for a secretary to dictate memoranda or letters to him. When any interesting matter requires his attention he gives himself up to it heart and soul, never letting it escape his thoughts. And his life, his health, lies in all this. His mind is always busy; his will and strength must always be exerting themselves. You may know that he long cultivated Latin verse with affection; and I believe that in his days of struggle he had a passion for journalism, inspired the articles of the newspapers he subsidised, and

even dictated some of them when his most cherished ideas were in question."

Silence fell. At every moment Narcisse craned his neck to see if the little papal *cortège* were not emerging from the Gallery of the Tapestries to pass them on its way to the gardens. "You are perhaps aware," he resumed, "that his Holiness is brought down on a low chair which is small enough to pass through every doorway. It's quite a journey, more than a mile, through the *loggie*, the *stanze* of Raffaele, the painting and sculpture galleries, not to mention the numerous staircases, before he reaches the gardens, where a pair-horse carriage awaits him. It's quite fine this evening, so he will surely come. We must have a little patience."

Whilst Narcisse was giving these particulars Pierre again sank into a reverie and saw the whole extraordinary history pass before him. First came the worldly, ostentatious popes of the Renaissance, those who resuscitated antiquity with so much passion and dreamt of draping the Holy See with the purple of empire once more. There was Paul II, the magnificent Venetian who built the Palazzo di Venezia; Sixtus IV, to whom one owes the Sixtine Chapel; and Julius II and Leo X, who made Rome a city of theatrical pomp, prodigious festivities, tournaments, ballets, hunts, masquerades, and banquets. At that time the papacy had just rediscovered Olympus amidst the dust of buried ruins, and as though intoxicated by the torrent of life which arose from the ancient soil, it founded the museums, thus reviving the superb temples of the pagan age, and restor-

ing them to the cult of universal admiration. Never had the Church been in such peril of death, for if the Christ was still honoured at St. Peter's, Jupiter and all the other gods and goddesses, with their beauteous, triumphant flesh, were enthroned in the halls of the Vatican. Then, however, another vision passed before Pierre, one of the modern popes prior to the Italian occupation—notably Pius IX, who, whilst yet free, often went into his good city of Rome. His huge red and gold coach was drawn by six horses, surrounded by Swiss Guards and followed by Noble Guards; but now and again he would alight in the Corso, and continue his promenade on foot, and then the mounted men of the escort galloped forward to give warning and stop the traffic. The carriages drew up, the gentlemen had to alight and kneel on the pavement, whilst the ladies simply rose and devoutly inclined their heads, as the Holy Father, attended by his Court, slowly wended his way to the Piazza del Popolo, smiling and blessing at every step. And now had come Leo XIII, the voluntary prisoner, shut up in the Vatican for eighteen years, and he, behind the high, silent walls, in the unknown sphere where each of his days flowed by so quietly, had acquired a more exalted majesty, instinct with sacred and redoubtable mysteriousness.

Ah! that Pope whom you no longer meet or see, that Pope hidden from the common of mankind like some terrible divinity whom the priests alone dare to approach! It is in that sumptuous Vatican which his forerunners of the Renaissance built and adorned for giant festivities that he has secluded himself; it

is there he lives, far from the crowd, in prison with the handsome men and the lovely women of Michael Angelo and Raffaele, with the gods and goddesses of marble, with the whole of resplendent Olympus celebrating around him the religion of life and light. With him the entire Papacy is there steeped in paganism. What a spectacle when the slender, weak old man, all soul, so purely white, passes along the galleries of the Museum of Antiquities on his way to the gardens. Right and left the statues behold him pass with all their bare flesh. There is Jupiter, there is Apollo, there is Venus the *dominatrix*, there is Pan, the universal god in whose laugh the joys of earth ring out. Nereids bathe in transparent water. Bacchantes roll, unveiled, in the warm grass. Centaurs gallop by carrying lovely girls, faint with rapture, on their steaming haunches. Ariadne is surprised by Bacchus, Ganymede fondles the eagle, Adonis fires youth and maiden with his flame. And on and on passes the weak, white old man, swaying on his low chair, amidst that splendid triumph, that display and glorification of the flesh, which shouts aloud the omnipotence of Nature, of everlasting matter! Since they have found it again, exhumed it, and honoured it, that it is which once more reigns there imperishable; and in vain have they set vine leaves on the statues, even as they have swathed the huge figures of Michael Angelo; sex still flares on all sides, life overflows, its germs course in torrents through the veins of the world. Near by, in that Vatican library of incomparable wealth, where all human science lies slumbering, there lurks a yet more terrible danger — the danger of an explosion which

would sweep away everything, Vatican and St. Peter's also, if one day the books in their turn were to awake and speak aloud as speak the beauty of Venus and the manliness of Apollo. But the white, diaphanous old man seems neither to see nor to hear, and the huge heads of Jupiter, the trunks of Hercules, the equivocal statues of Antinous continue to watch him as he passes on!

However, Narcisse had become impatient, and, going in search of an attendant, he learnt from him that his Holiness had already gone down. To shorten the distance, indeed, the *cortège* often passes along a kind of open gallery leading towards the Mint. "Well, let us go down as well," said Narcisse to Pierre; "I will try to show you the gardens."

Down below, in the vestibule, a door of which opened on to a broad path, he spoke to another attendant, a former pontifical soldier whom he personally knew. The man at once let him pass with Pierre, but was unable to tell him whether Monsignor Gamba del Zoppo had accompanied his Holiness that day.

"No matter," resumed Narcisse when he and his companion were alone in the path; "I don't despair of meeting him—and these, you see, are the famous gardens of the Vatican."

They are very extensive grounds, and the Pope can go quite two and a half miles by passing along the paths of the wood, the vineyard, and the kitchen garden. Occupying the plateau of the Vatican hill, which the mediæval wall of Leo IV still girdles, the gardens are separated from the neighbouring valleys as by a fortified rampart. The wall formerly stretched to the

castle of Sant' Angelo, thereby forming what was known as the Leonine City. No inquisitive eyes can peer into the grounds excepting from the dome of St. Peter's, which casts its huge shadow over them during the hot summer weather. They are, too, quite a little world, which each pope has taken pleasure in embellishing. There is a large parterre with lawns of geometrical patterns, planted with handsome palms and adorned with lemon and orange trees in pots; there is a less formal, a shadier garden, where, amidst deep plantations of yoke-elms, you find Giovanni Veszanzio's fountain, the Aquilone, and Pius IV's old Casino; then, too, there are the woods with their superb evergreen oaks, their thickets of plane-trees, acacias, and pines, intersected by broad avenues, which are delightfully pleasant for leisurely strolls; and finally, on turning to the left, beyond other clumps of trees, come the kitchen garden and the vineyard, the last well tended.

Whilst walking through the wood Narcisse told Pierre of the life led by the Holy Father in these gardens. He strolls in them every second day when the weather allows. Formerly the popes left the Vatican for the Quirinal, which is cooler and healthier, as soon as May arrived; and spent the dog days at Castle Gandolfo on the margins of the Lake of Albano. But nowadays the only summer residence possessed by his Holiness is a virtually intact tower of the old rampart of Leo IV. He here spends the hottest days, and has even erected a sort of pavilion beside it for the accommodation of his suite. Narcisse, like one at home, went in and secured permission for

Pierre to glance at the one room occupied by the Pope, a spacious round chamber with semispherical ceiling, on which are painted the heavens with symbolical figures of the constellations; one of the latter, the lion, having two stars for eyes — stars which a system of lighting causes to sparkle during the night. The walls of the tower are so thick that after blocking up a window, a kind of room, for the accommodation of a couch, has been contrived in the embrasure. Beside this couch the only furniture is a large work-table, a dining-table with flaps, and a large regal arm-chair, a mass of gilding, one of the gifts of the Pope's episcopal jubilee. And you dream of the days of solitude and perfect silence, spent in that low donjon hall, where the coolness of a tomb prevails whilst the heavy suns of August are scorching overpowered Rome.

An astronomical observatory has been installed in another tower, surmounted by a little white cupola, which you espy amidst the greenery; and under the trees there is also a Swiss chalet, where Leo XIII is fond of resting. He sometimes goes on foot to the kitchen garden, and takes much interest in the vineyard, visiting it to see if the grapes are ripening and if the vintage will be a good one. What most astonished Pierre, however, was to learn that the Holy Father had been very fond of "sport" before age had weakened him. He was indeed passionately addicted to bird snaring. Broad-meshed nets were hung on either side of a path on the fringe of a plantation, and in the middle of the path were placed cages containing the decoys, whose songs soon attracted all the birds of the neighbourhood — red-breasts, white-throats, black-

caps, nightingales, fig-peckers of all sorts. And when a numerous company of them was gathered together Leo XIII, seated out of sight and watching, would suddenly clap his hands and startle the birds, which flew up and were caught by the wings in the meshes of the nets. All that then remained to be done was to take them out of the nets and stifle them by a touch of the thumb. Roast fig-peckers are delicious.¹

As Pierre came back through the wood he had another surprise. He suddenly lighted on a "Grotto of Lourdes," a miniature imitation of the original, built of rocks and blocks of cement. And such was his emotion at the sight that he could not conceal it. "It's true, then!" said he. "I was told of it, but I thought that the Holy Father was of loftier mind — free from all such base superstitions!"

"Oh!" replied Narcisse, "I fancy that the grotto dates from Pius IX, who evinced especial gratitude to our Lady of Lourdes. At all events, it must be a gift, and Leo XIII simply keeps it in repair."

For a few moments Pierre remained motionless and silent before that imitation grotto, that childish plaything. Some zealously devout visitors had left their visiting cards in the cracks of the cement-work! For his part, he felt very sad, and followed his companion with bowed head, lamenting the wretched idiocy of the world. Then, on emerging from the wood, on again reaching the parterre, he raised his eyes.

Ah! how exquisite in spite of everything was that decline of a lovely day, and what a victorious charm

¹ Perhaps so; but what a delightful pastime for the Vicar of the Divinity! — *Trans.*

ascended from the soil in that part of the gardens. There, in front of that bare, noble, burning parterre, far more than under the languishing foliage of the wood or among the fruitful vines, Pierre realised the strength of Nature. Above the grass growing meagrely over the compartments of geometrical pattern which the pathways traced there were barely a few low shrubs, dwarf roses, aloes, rare tufts of withering flowers. Some green bushes still described the escutcheon of Pius IX in accordance with the strange taste of former times. And amidst the warm silence one only heard the faint crystalline murmur of the water trickling from the basin of the central fountain. But all Rome, its ardent heavens, sovereign grace, and conquering voluptuousness, seemed with their own soul to animate this vast rectangular patch of decorative gardening, this mosaic of verdure, which in its semi-abandonment and scorched decay assumed an aspect of melancholy pride, instinct with the ever returning quiver of a passion of fire that could not die. Some antique vases and statues, whitely nude under the setting sun, skirted the parterres. And above the aroma of eucalyptus and of pine, stronger even than that of the ripening oranges, there rose the odour of the large, bitter box-shrubs, so laden with pungent life that it disturbed one as one passed as if indeed it were the very scent of the fecundity of that ancient soil saturated with the dust of generations.

"It's very strange that we have not met his Holiness," exclaimed Narcisse. "Perhaps his carriage took the other path through the wood while we were in the tower."

Then, reverting to Monsignor Gamba del Zoppo, the *attaché* explained that the functions of *Copiere*, or papal cup-bearer, which his cousin should have discharged as one of the four *Camerieri segreti partecipanti* had become purely honorary since the dinners offered to diplomatists or in honour of newly consecrated bishops had been given by the Cardinal Secretary of State. Monsignor Gamba, whose cowardice and nullity were legendary, seemed therefore to have no other rôle than that of enlivening Leo XIII, whose favour he had won by his incessant flattery and the anecdotes which he was ever relating about both the black and the white worlds. Indeed this fat, amiable man, who could even be obliging when his interests were not in question, was a perfect newspaper, brimful of tittle-tattle, disdaining no item of gossip whatever, even if it came from the kitchens. And thus he was quietly marching towards the cardinalate, certain of obtaining the hat without other exertion than that of bringing a budget of gossip to beguile the pleasant hours of the promenade. And Heaven knew that he was always able to garner an abundant harvest of news in that closed Vatican swarming with prelates of every kind, in that womanless pontifical family of old begowned bachelors, all secretly exercised by vast ambitions, covert and revolting rivalries, and ferocious hatreds, which, it is said, are still sometimes carried as far as the good old poison of ancient days.

All at once Narcisse stopped. "Ah!" he exclaimed, "I was certain of it. There's the Holy Father! But we are not in luck. He won't even see us; he is about to get into his carriage again."

As he spoke a carriage drew up at the verge of the wood, and a little *cortège* emerging from a narrow path, went towards it.

Pierre felt as if he had received a great blow in the heart. Motionless beside his companion, and half hidden by a lofty vase containing a lemon-tree, it was only from a distance that he was able to see the white old man, looking so frail and slender in the wavy folds of his white cassock, and walking so very slowly with short, gliding steps. The young priest could scarcely distinguish the emaciated face of old diaphanous ivory, emphasised by a large nose which jutted out above thin lips. However, the Pontiff's black eyes were glittering with an inquisitive smile, while his right ear was inclined towards Monsignor Gamba del Zoppo, who was doubtless finishing some story at once rich and short, flowery and dignified. And on the left walked a Noble Guard; and two other prelates followed.

It was but a familiar apparition; Leo XIII was already climbing into the closed carriage. And Pierre, in the midst of that large, odoriferous, burning garden, again experienced the singular emotion which had come upon him in the Gallery of the Candelabra while he was picturing the Pope on his way between the Apollos and Venuses radiant in their triumphant nudity. There, however, it was only pagan art which had celebrated the eternity of life, the superb, almighty powers of Nature. But here he had beheld the Pontiff steeped in Nature itself, in Nature clad in the most lovely, most voluptuous, most passionate guise. Ah! that Pope, that old

man strolling with his Divinity of grief, humility, and renunciation along the paths of those gardens of love, in the languid evenings of the hot summer days, beneath the caressing scents of pine and eucalyptus, ripe oranges, and tall, acrid box-shrubs! The whole atmosphere around him proclaimed the powers of the great god Pan. How pleasant was the thought of living there, amidst that magnificence of heaven and of earth, of loving the beauty of woman and of rejoicing in the fruitfulness of all! And suddenly the decisive truth burst forth that from a land of such joy and light it was only possible for a temporal religion of conquest and political domination to rise; not the mystical, pain-fraught religion of the North—the religion of the soul!

However, Narcisse led the young priest away, telling him other anecdotes as they went—anecdotes of the occasional *bonhomie* of Leo XIII, who would stop to chat with the gardeners, and question them about the health of the trees and the sale of the oranges. And he also mentioned the Pope's former passion for a pair of gazelles, sent him from Africa, two graceful creatures which he had been fond of caressing, and at whose death he had shed tears. But Pierre no longer listened. When they found themselves on the Piazza of St. Peter's, he turned round and gazed at the Vatican once more.

His eyes had fallen on the gate of bronze, and he remembered having wondered that morning what there might be behind these metal panels ornamented with big nails. And he did not yet dare to answer the question, and decide if the new nations thirsting for

fraternity and justice would really find there the religion necessary for the democracies of to-morrow; for he had not been able to probe things, and only carried a first impression away with him. But how keen it was, and how ill it boded for his dreams! A gate of bronze! Yes, a hard, impregnable gate, so completely shutting the Vatican off from the rest of the world that nothing new had entered the palace for three hundred years. Behind that portal the old centuries, as far as the sixteenth, remained immutable. Time seemed to have stayed its course there for ever; nothing more stirred; the very costumes of the Swiss Guards, the Noble Guards, and the prelates themselves were unchanged; and you found yourself in the world of three hundred years ago, with its etiquette, its costumes, and its ideas. That the popes in a spirit of haughty protest should for five and twenty years have voluntarily shut themselves up in their palace was already regrettable; but this imprisonment of centuries within the past, within the grooves of tradition, was far more serious and dangerous. It was all Catholicism which was thus imprisoned, whose dogmas and sacerdotal organisation were obstinately immobilised. Perhaps, in spite of its apparent flexibility, Catholicism was really unable to yield in anything, under peril of being swept away, and therein lay both its weakness and its strength. And then what a terrible world was there, how great the pride and ambition, how numerous the hatreds and rivalries! And how strange the prison, how singular the company assembled behind the bars—the Crucified by the side of Jupiter Capitolinus, all pagan antiquity fraternising

with the Apostles, all the splendours of the Renaissance surrounding the pastor of the Gospel who reigns in the name of the humble and the poor !

The sun was sinking, the gentle, luscious sweetness of the Roman evenings was falling from the limpid heavens, and after that splendid day spent with Michael Angelo, Raffaele, the ancients, and the Pope, in the finest palace of the world, the young priest lingered, distracted, on the Piazza of St. Peter's.

"Well, you must excuse me, my dear Abbé," concluded Narcisse. "But I will now confess to you that I suspect my worthy cousin of a fear that he might compromise himself by meddling in your affair. I shall certainly see him again, but you will do well not to put too much reliance on him."

It was nearly six o'clock when Pierre got back to the Boccanera mansion. As a rule, he passed in all modesty down the lane, and entered by the little side door, a key of which had been given him. But he had that morning received a letter from M. de la Choue, and desired to communicate it to Benedetta. So he ascended the grand staircase, and on reaching the ante-room was surprised to find nobody there. As a rule, whenever the man-servant went out Victorine installed herself in his place and busied herself with some needlework. Her chair was there, and Pierre even noticed some linen which she had left on a little table when probably summoned elsewhere. Then, as the door of the first reception-room was ajar, he at last ventured in. It was almost night there already, the twilight was softly dying away, and all at once

the young priest stopped short, fearing to take another step, for, from the room beyond, the large yellow *salon*, there came a murmur of feverish, distracted words, ardent entreaties, fierce panting, a rustling and a shuffling of footsteps. And suddenly Pierre no longer hesitated, urged on despite himself by the conviction that the sounds he heard were those of a struggle, and that some one was hard pressed.

And when he darted into the further room he was stupefied, for Dario was there, no longer showing the degenerate elegance of the last scion of an exhausted race, but maddened by the hot, frantic blood of the *Boccaneras* which had bubbled up within him. He had clasped Benedetta by the shoulders in a frenzy of passion and was scorching her face with his hot, entreating words: "But since you say, my darling, that it is all over, that your marriage will never be dissolved—oh! why should we be wretched for ever! Love me as you do love me, and let me love you—let me love you!"

But the Contessina, with an indescribable expression of tenderness and suffering on her tearful face, repulsed him with her outstretched arms, she likewise evincing a fierce energy as she repeated: "No, no; I love you, but it must not, it must not be."

At that moment, amidst the roar of his despair, Dario became conscious that some one was entering the room. He turned and gazed at Pierre with an expression of stupefied insanity, scarce able even to recognise him. Then he carried his two hands to his face, to his bloodshot eyes and his cheeks wet with scalding tears, and fled, heaving a terrible, pain-

fraught sigh in which baffled passion mingled with grief and repentance.

Benedetta seated herself, breathing hard, her strength and courage wellnigh exhausted. But as Pierre, too much embarrassed to speak, turned towards the door, she addressed him in a calmer voice: "No, no, Monsieur l'Abbé, do not go away — sit down, I pray you; I should like to speak to you for a moment."

He thereupon thought it his duty to account for his sudden entrance, and explained that he had found the door of the first *salon* ajar, and that Victorine was not in the ante-room, though he had seen her work lying on the table there.

"Yes," exclaimed the Contessina, "Victorine ought to have been there; I saw her there but a short time ago. And when my poor Dario lost his head I called her. Why did she not come?" Then, with sudden expansion, leaning towards Pierre, she continued: "Listen, Monsieur l'Abbé, I will tell you what happened, for I don't want you to form too bad an opinion of my poor Dario. It was all in some measure my fault. Last night he asked me for an appointment here in order that we might have a quiet chat, and as I knew that my aunt would be absent at this time to-day I told him to come. It was only natural — wasn't it? — that we should want to see one another and come to an agreement after the grievous news that my marriage will probably never be annulled. We suffer too much, and must form a decision. And so when he came this evening we began to weep and embrace, mingling our tears together. I kissed him again and

again, telling him how I adored him, how bitterly grieved I was at being the cause of his sufferings, and how surely I should die of grief at seeing him so unhappy. Ah! no doubt I did wrong; I ought not to have caught him to my heart and embraced him as I did, for it maddened him, Monsieur l'Abbé; he lost his head, and would have made me break my vow to the Blessed Virgin."

She spoke these words in all tranquillity and simplicity, without sign of embarrassment, like a young and beautiful woman who is at once sensible and practical. Then she resumed: "Oh! I know my poor Dario well, but it does not prevent me from loving him; perhaps, indeed, it only makes me love him the more. He looks delicate, perhaps rather sickly, but in truth he is a man of passion. Yes, the old blood of my people bubbles up in him. I know something of it myself, for when I was a child I sometimes had fits of angry passion which left me exhausted on the floor, and even now, when the gusts arise within me, I have to fight against myself and torture myself in order that I may not act madly. But my poor Dario does not know how to suffer. He is like a child whose fancies must be gratified. And yet at bottom he has a good deal of common sense; he waits for me because he knows that the only real happiness lies with the woman who adores him."

As Pierre listened he was able to form a more precise idea of the young prince, of whose character he had hitherto had but a vague perception. Whilst dying of love for his cousin, Dario had ever been a man of pleasure. Though he was no doubt very ami-

able, the basis of his temperament was none the less egotism. And, in particular, he was unable to endure suffering; he loathed suffering, ugliness, and poverty, whether they affected himself or others. Both his flesh and his soul required gaiety, brilliancy, show, life in the full sunlight. And withal he was exhausted, with no strength left him but for the idle life he led, so incapable of thought and will that the idea of joining the new *régime* had not even occurred to him. Yet he had all the unbounded pride of a Roman; sagacity—a keen, practical perception of the real—was mingled with his indolence; while his inveterate love of woman, more frequently displayed in charm of manner, burst forth at times in attacks of frantic sensuality.

“After all he is a man,” concluded Benedetta in a low voice, “and I must not ask impossibilities of him.” Then, as Pierre gazed at her, his notions of Italian jealousy quite upset, she exclaimed, aglow with passionate adoration: “No, no. Situated as we are, I am not jealous. I know very well that he will always return to me, and that he will be mine alone whenever I please, whenever it may be possible.”

Silence followed; shadows were filling the room, the gilding of the large pier tables faded away, and infinite melancholy fell from the lofty, dim ceiling and the old hangings, yellow like autumn leaves. But soon, by some chance play of the waning light, a painting stood out above the sofa on which the Contessina was seated. It was the portrait of the beautiful young girl with the turban—Cassia Boccanera the forerunner, the *amorosa* and avengeress.

Again was Pierre struck by the portrait's resemblance to Benedetta, and, thinking aloud, he resumed: "Passion always proves the stronger; there invariably comes a moment when one succumbs —"

But Benedetta violently interrupted him: "I! I! Ah! you do not know me; I would rather die!" And with extraordinary exaltation, all aglow with love, as if her superstitious faith had fired her passion to ecstasy, she continued: "I have vowed to the Madonna that I will belong to none but the man I love, and to him only when he is my husband. And hitherto I have kept that vow, at the cost of my happiness, and I will keep it still, even if it cost me my life! Yes, we will die, my poor Dario and I, if it be necessary; but the holy Virgin has my vow, and the angels shall not weep in heaven!"

She was all in those words, her nature all simplicity, intricate, inexplicable though it might seem. She was doubtless swayed by that idea of human nobility which Christianity has set in renunciation and purity; a protest, as it were, against eternal matter, against the forces of Nature, the everlasting fruitfulness of life. But there was more than this; she reserved herself, like a divine and priceless gift, to be bestowed on the one being whom her heart had chosen, he who would be her lord and master when God should have united them in marriage. For her everything lay in the blessing of the priest, in the religious solemnisation of matrimony. And thus one understood her long resistance to Prada, whom she did not love, and her despairing, grievous resistance to Dario, whom she did love, but who was not her

husband. And how torturing it was for that soul of fire to have to resist her love; how continual was the combat waged by duty in the Virgin's name against the wild, passionate blood of her race! Ignorant, indolent though she might be, she was capable of great fidelity of heart, and, moreover, she was not given to dreaming: love might have its immaterial charms, but she desired it complete.

As Pierre looked at her in the dying twilight he seemed to see and understand her for the first time. The duality of her nature appeared in her somewhat full, fleshy lips, in her big black eyes, which suggested a dark, tempestuous night illumined by flashes of lightning, and in the calm, sensible expression of the rest of her gentle, infantile face. And, withal, behind those eyes of flame, beneath that pure, candid skin, one divined the internal tension of a superstitious, proud, and self-willed woman, who was obstinately intent on reserving herself for her one love. And Pierre could well understand that she should be adored, that she should fill the life of the man she chose with passion, and that to his own eyes she should appear like the younger sister of that lovely, tragic Cassia who, unwilling to survive the blow that had rendered self-bestowal impossible, had flung herself into the Tiber, dragging her brother Ercole and the corpse of her lover Flavio with her.

However, with a gesture of kindly affection Benedetta caught hold of Pierre's hands. "You have been here a fortnight, Monsieur l'Abbé," said she, "and I have come to like you very much, for I feel you to be a friend. If at first you do not understand us, at

least pray do not judge us too severely. Ignorant as I may be, I always strive to act for the best, I assure you."

Pierre was greatly touched by her affectionate graciousness, and thanked her whilst for a moment retaining her beautiful hands in his own, for he also was becoming much attached to her. A fresh dream was carrying him off, that of educating her, should he have the time, or, at all events, of not returning home before winning her soul over to his own ideas of future charity and fraternity. Did not that adorable, unoccupied, indolent, ignorant creature, who only knew how to defend her love, personify the Italy of yesterday? The Italy of yesterday, so lovely and so sleepy, instinct with a dying grace, charming one even in her drowsiness, and retaining so much mystery in the fathomless depths of her black, passionate eyes! And what a rôle would be that of awakening her, instructing her, winning her over to truth, making her the rejuvenated Italy of to-morrow such as he had dreamt of! Even in that disastrous marriage with Count Prada he tried to see merely a first attempt at revival which had failed, the modern Italy of the North being over-hasty, too brutal in its eagerness to love and transform that gentle, belated Rome which was yet so superb and indolent. But might he not take up the task? Had he not noticed that his book, after the astonishment of the first perusal, had remained a source of interest and reflection with Benedetta amidst the emptiness of her days given over to grief? What! was it really possible that she might find some appeasement for her own wretchedness by interesting herself in the humble, in the happiness of

the poor? Emotion already thrilled her at the idea, and he, quivering at the thought of all the boundless love that was within her and that she might bestow, vowed to himself that he would draw tears of pity from her eyes.

But the night had now almost completely fallen, and Benedetta rose to ask for a lamp. Then, as Pierre was about to take leave, she detained him for another moment in the gloom. He could no longer see her; he only heard her grave voice: "You will not go away with too bad an opinion of us, will you, Monsieur l'Abbé? We love one another, Dario and I, and that is no sin when one behaves as one ought. Ah! yes, I love him, and have loved him for years. I was barely thirteen, he was eighteen, and we already loved one another wildly in those big gardens of the Villa Montefiori which are now all broken up. Ah! what days we spent there, whole afternoons among the trees, hours in secret hiding-places, where we kissed like little angels. When the oranges ripened their perfume intoxicated us. And the large box-plants, ah, *Dio!* how they enveloped us, how their strong, acrid scent made our hearts beat! I can never smell them nowadays without feeling faint!"

A man-servant brought in the lamp, and Pierre ascended to his room. But when half-way up the little staircase he perceived Victorine, who started slightly, as if she had posted herself there to watch his departure from the *salon*. And now, as she followed him up, talking and seeking for information, he suddenly realised what had happened. "Why did you not go to your mistress instead of running off, he

asked, "when she called you, while you were sewing in the ante-room?"

At first she tried to feign astonishment and reply that she had heard nothing. But her good-natured, frank face did not know how to lie, and she ended by confessing, with a gay, courageous air. "Well," she said, "it surely wasn't for me to interfere between lovers! Besides, my poor little Benedetta is simply torturing herself to death with those ideas of hers. Why shouldn't they be happy, since they love one another? Life isn't so amusing as some may think. And how bitterly one regrets not having seized hold of happiness when the time for it has gone!"

Once alone in his room, Pierre suddenly staggered, quite overcome. The great box-plants, the great box-plants with their acrid, perturbing perfume! She, Benedetta, like himself, had quivered as she smelt them; and he saw them once more in a vision of the pontifical gardens, the voluptuous gardens of Rome, deserted, glowing under the August sun. And now his whole day crystallised, assumed clear and full significance. It spoke to him of the fruitful awakening, of the eternal protest of Nature and life, Venus and Hercules, whom one may bury for centuries beneath the soil, but who, nevertheless, one day arise from it, and though one may seek to wall them up within the domineering, stubborn, immutable Vatican, reign yet even there, and rule the whole, wide world with sovereign power!

VII

ON the following day as Pierre, after a long ramble, once more found himself in front of the Vatican, whither a harassing attraction ever led him, he again encountered Monsignor Nani. It was a Wednesday evening, and the Assessor of the Holy Office had just come from his weekly audience with the Pope, whom he had acquainted with the proceedings of the Congregation at its meeting that morning. "What a fortunate chance, my dear sir," said he; "I was thinking of you. Would you like to see his Holiness in public while you are waiting for a private audience?"

Nani had put on his pleasant expression of smiling civility, beneath which one would barely detect the faint irony of a superior man who knew everything, prepared everything, and could do everything.

"Why, yes, Monsignor," Pierre replied, somewhat astonished by the abruptness of the offer. "Anything of a nature to divert one's mind is welcome when one loses one's time in waiting."

"No, no, you are not losing your time," replied the prelate. "You are looking round you, reflecting, and enlightening yourself. Well, this is the point. You are doubtless aware that the great international pilgrimage of the Peter's Pence Fund will arrive in

Rome on Friday, and be received on Saturday by his Holiness. On Sunday, moreover, the Holy Father will celebrate mass at the Basilica. Well, I have a few cards left, and here are some very good places for both ceremonies." So saying he produced an elegant little pocketbook bearing a gilt monogram and handed Pierre two cards, one green and the other pink. "If you only knew how people fight for them," he resumed. "You remember that I told you of two French ladies who are consumed by a desire to see his Holiness. Well, I did not like to support their request for an audience in too pressing a way, and they have had to content themselves with cards like these. The fact is, the Holy Father is somewhat fatigued at the present time. I found him looking yellow and feverish just now. But he has so much courage; he nowadays only lives by force of soul." Then Nani's smile came back with its almost imperceptible touch of derision as he resumed: "Impatient ones ought to find a great example in him, my dear son. I heard that Monsignor Gamba del Zoppo had been unable to help you. But you must not be too much distressed on that account. This long delay is assuredly a grace of Providence in order that you may instruct yourself and come to understand certain things which you French priests do not, unfortunately, realise when you arrive in Rome. And perhaps it will prevent you from making certain mistakes. Come, calm yourself, and remember that the course of events is in the hands of God, who, in His sovereign wisdom, fixes the hour for all things."

Thereupon Nani offered Pierre his plump, supple,

shapely hand, a hand soft like a woman's but with the grasp of a vice. And afterwards he climbed into his carriage, which was waiting for him.

It so happened that the letter which Pierre had received from Viscount Philibert de la Choue was a long cry of spite and despair in connection with the great international pilgrimage of the Peter's Pence Fund. The Viscount wrote from his bed, to which he was confined by a very severe attack of gout, and his grief at being unable to come to Rome was the greater as the President of the Committee, who would naturally present the pilgrims to the Pope, happened to be Baron de Fouras, one of his most bitter adversaries of the old conservative, Catholic party. M. de la Choue felt certain that the Baron would profit by his opportunity to win the Pope over to the theory of free corporations; whereas he, the Viscount, believed that the salvation of Catholicism and the world could only be worked by a system in which the corporations should be closed and obligatory. And so he urged Pierre to exert himself with such cardinals as were favourable, to secure an audience with the Holy Father whatever the obstacles, and to remain in Rome until he should have secured the Pontiff's approbation, which alone could decide the victory. The letter further mentioned that the pilgrimage would be made up of a number of groups headed by bishops and other ecclesiastical dignitaries, and would comprise three thousand people from France, Belgium, Spain, Austria, and even Germany. Two thousand of these would come from France alone. An international committee had assembled in Paris to organise every-

thing and select the pilgrims, which last had proved a delicate task, as a representative gathering had been desired, a commingling of members of the aristocracy, sisterhood of middle-class ladies, and associations of the working classes, among whom all social differences would be forgotten in the union of a common faith. And the Viscount added that the pilgrimage would bring the Pope a large sum of money, and had settled the date of its arrival in the Eternal City in such wise that it would figure as a solemn protest of the Catholic world against the festivities of September 20, by which the Quirinal had just celebrated the anniversary of the occupation of Rome.

The reception of the pilgrimage being fixed for noon, Pierre in all simplicity thought that he would be sufficiently early if he reached St. Peter's at eleven. The function was to take place in the Hall of Beatifications, which is a large and handsome apartment over the portico, and has been arranged as a chapel since 1890. One of its windows opens on to the central balcony, whence the popes formerly blessed the people, the city, and the world. To reach the apartment you pass through two other halls of audience, the Sala Regia and Sala Ducale, and when Pierre wished to gain the place to which his green card entitled him he found both those rooms so extremely crowded that he could only elbow his way forward with the greatest difficulty. For an hour already the three or four thousand people assembled there had been stifling, full of growing emotion and feverishness. At last the young priest managed to reach the threshold of the third hall, but was so discouraged at

sight of the extraordinary multitude of heads before him that he did not attempt to go any further.

The apartment, which he could survey at a glance by rising on tip-toe, appeared to him to be very rich of aspect, with walls gilded and painted under a severe and lofty ceiling. On a low platform, where the altar usually stood, facing the entry, the pontifical throne had now been set: a large arm-chair upholstered in red velvet with glittering golden back and arms; whilst the hangings of the *baldacchino*, also of red velvet, fell behind and spread out on either side like a pair of huge purple wings. However, what more particularly interested Pierre was the wildly passionate concourse of people whose hearts he could almost hear beating and whose eyes sought to beguile their feverish impatience by contemplating and adoring the empty throne. As if it had been some golden monstrance which the Divinity in person would soon deign to occupy, that throne dazzled them, disturbed them, filled them all with devout rapture. Among the throng were workmen rigged out in their Sunday best, with clear childish eyes and rough ecstatic faces; ladies of the upper classes wearing black, as the regulations required, and looking intensely pale from the sacred awe which mingled with their excessive desire; and gentlemen in evening dress, who appeared quite glorious, inflated with the conviction that they were saving both the Church and the nations. One cluster of dress-coats assembled near the throne, was particularly noticeable; it comprised the members of the International Committee, headed by Baron de Fouras, a very tall, stout, fair man of

fifty, who bestirred and exerted himself and issued orders like some commander on the morning of a decisive victory. Then, amidst the general mass of grey, neutral hue, there gleamed the violet silk of some bishop's cassock, for each pastor had desired to remain with his flock; whilst members of various religious orders, superiors in brown, black, and white habits, rose up above all others with lofty bearded or shaven heads. Right and left drooped banners which associations and congregations had brought to present to the Pope. And the sea of pilgrims ever waved and surged with a growing clamour: so much impatient love being exhaled by those perspiring faces, burning eyes, and hungry mouths that the atmosphere, reeking with the odour of the throng, seemed thickened and darkened.

All at once, however, Pierre perceived Monsignor Nani standing near the throne and beckoning him to approach; and although the young priest replied by a modest gesture, implying that he preferred to remain where he was, the prelate insisted and even sent an usher to make way for him. Directly the usher had led him forward, Nani inquired: "Why did you not come to take your place? Your card entitled you to be here, on the left of the throne."

"The truth is," answered the priest, "I did not like to disturb so many people. Besides, this is an undue honour for me."

"No, no; I gave you that place in order that you should occupy it. I want you to be in the first rank, so that you may see everything of the ceremony."

Pierre could not do otherwise than thank him.

Then, on looking round, he saw that several cardinals and many other prelates were likewise waiting on either side of the throne. But it was in vain that he sought Cardinal Boccanera, who only came to St. Peter's and the Vatican on the days when his functions required his presence there. However, he recognised Cardinal Sanguinetti, who, broad and sturdy and red of face, was talking in a loud voice to Baron de Fouras. And Nani, with his obliging air, stepped up again to point out two other Eminences who were high and mighty personages — the Cardinal Vicar, a short, fat man, with a feverish countenance scorched by ambition, and the Cardinal Secretary, who was robust and bony, fashioned as with a hatchet, suggesting a romantic type of Sicilian bandit, who, to other courses, had preferred the discreet, smiling diplomacy of the Church. A few steps further on, and quite alone, the Grand Penitentiary, silent and seemingly suffering, showed his grey, lean, ascetic profile.

Noon had struck. There was a false alert, a burst of emotion, which swept in like a wave from the other halls. But it was merely the ushers opening a passage for the *cortège*. Then, all at once, acclamations arose in the first hall, gathered volume, and drew nearer. This time it was the *cortège* itself. First came a detachment of the Swiss Guard in undress, headed by a sergeant; then a party of chair-bearers in red; and next the domestic prelates, including the four *Camerieri segreti partecipanti*. And finally, between two rows of Noble Guards, in semi-gala uniforms, walked the Holy Father, alone, smiling a pale

smile, and slowly blessing the pilgrims on either hand. In his wake the clamour which had risen in the other apartments swept into the Hall of Beatifications with the violence of delirious love; and, under his slender, white, benedictive hand, all those distracted creatures fell upon both knees, nought remaining but the prostration of a devout multitude, overwhelmed, as it were, by the apparition of its god.

Quivering, carried away, Pierre had knelt like the others. Ah! that omnipotence, that irresistible contagion of faith, of the redoubtable current from the spheres beyond, increased tenfold by a *scenario* and a pomp of sovereign grandeur! Profound silence fell when Leo XIII was seated on the throne surrounded by the cardinals and his court; and then the ceremony proceeded according to rite and usage. First a bishop spoke, kneeling and laying the homage of the faithful of all Christendom at his Holiness's feet. The President of the Committee, Baron de Fouras, followed, remaining erect whilst he read a long address in which he introduced the pilgrimage and explained its motive, investing it with all the gravity of a political and religious protest. This stout man had a shrill and piercing voice, and his words jarred like the grating of a gimlet as he proclaimed the grief of the Catholic world at the spoliation which the Holy See had endured for a quarter of a century, and the desire of all the nations there represented by the pilgrims to console the supreme and venerated Head of the Church by bringing him the offerings of rich and poor, even to the mites of the humblest, in order that the Papacy might retain the pride of independence and

be able to treat its enemies with contempt. And he also spoke of France, deplored her errors, predicted her return to healthy traditions, and gave it to be understood that she remained in spite of everything the most opulent and generous of the Christian nations, the donor whose gold and presents flowed into Rome in a never ending stream. At last Leo XIII arose to reply to the bishop and the baron. His voice was full, with a strong nasal twang, and surprised one coming from a man so slight of build. In a few sentences he expressed his gratitude, saying how touched he was by the devotion of the nations to the Holy See. Although the times might be bad, the final triumph could not be delayed much longer. There were evident signs that mankind was returning to faith, and that iniquity would soon cease under the universal dominion of the Christ. As for France, was she not the eldest daughter of the Church, and had she not given too many proofs of her affection for the Holy See for the latter ever to cease loving her? Then, raising his arm, he bestowed on all the pilgrims present, on the societies and enterprises they represented, on their families and friends, on France, on all the nations of the Catholic world, his apostolic benediction, in gratitude for the precious help which they sent him. And whilst he was again seating himself applause burst forth, frantic salvos of applause lasting for ten minutes and mingling with vivats and inarticulate cries — a passionate, tempestuous outburst, which made the very building shake.

Amidst this blast of frantic adoration Pierre gazed at Leo XIII, now again motionless on his throne.

With the papal cap on his head and the red cape edged with ermine about his shoulders, he retained in his long white cassock the rigid, sacerdotal attitude of an idol venerated by two hundred and fifty millions of Christians. Against the purple background of the hangings of the *baldacchino*, between the wing-like drapery on either side, enclosing, as it were, a brasier of glory, he assumed real majesty of aspect. He was no longer the feeble old man with the slow, jerky walk and the slender, scraggy neck of a poor ailing bird. The simious ugliness of his face, the largeness of his nose, the long slit of his mouth, the hugeness of his ears, the conflicting jumble of his withered features disappeared. In that waxen countenance you only distinguished the admirable, dark, deep eyes, beaming with eternal youth, with extraordinary intelligence and penetration. And then there was a resolute bracing of his entire person, a consciousness of the eternity which he represented, a regal nobility, born of the very circumstance that he was now but a mere breath, a soul set in so pellucid a body of ivory that it became visible as though it were already freed from the bonds of earth. And Pierre realised what such a man—the Sovereign Pontiff, the king obeyed by two hundred and fifty millions of subjects—must be for the devout and dolent creatures who came to adore him from so far, and who fell at his feet awestruck by the splendour of the powers incarnate in him. Behind him, amidst the purple of the hangings, what a gleam was suddenly afforded of the spheres beyond, what an Infinite of ideality and blinding glory! So many centuries of

history from the Apostle Peter downward, so much strength and genius, so many struggles and triumphs to be summed up in one being, the Elect, the Unique, the Superhuman! And what a miracle, incessantly renewed, was that of Heaven deigning to descend into human flesh, of the Deity fixing His abode in His chosen servant, whom He consecrated above and beyond all others, endowing him with all power and all science! What sacred perturbation, what emotion fraught with distracted love might one not feel at the thought of the Deity being ever there in the depths of that man's eyes, speaking with his voice and emanating from his hand each time that he raised it to bless! Could one imagine the exorbitant absoluteness of that sovereign who was infallible, who disposed of the totality of authority in this world and of salvation in the next! At all events, how well one understood that souls consumed by a craving for faith should fly towards him, that those who at last found the certainty they had so ardently sought should seek annihilation in him, the consolation of self-bestowal and disappearance within the Deity Himself.

Meantime, the ceremony was drawing to an end; Baron de Fouras was now presenting the members of the committee and a few other persons of importance. There was a slow procession with trembling genuflections and much greedy kissing of the papal ring and slipper. Then the banners were offered, and Pierre felt a pang on seeing that the finest and richest of them was one of Lourdes, an offering no doubt from the Fathers of the Immaculate Conception. On one side of the white, gold-bordered silk Our Lady of

Lourdes was painted, while on the other appeared a portrait of Leo XIII. Pierre saw the Pope smile at the presentment of himself, and was greatly grieved thereat, as though, indeed, his whole dream of an intellectual, evangelical Pope, disentangled from all low superstition, were crumbling away. And just then his eyes met those of Nani, who from the outset had been watching him with the inquisitive air of a man who is making an experiment.

"That banner is superb, isn't it?" said Nani, drawing near. "How it must please his Holiness to be so nicely painted in company with so pretty a virgin." And as the young priest, turning pale, did not reply, the prelate added, with an air of devout enjoyment: "We are very fond of Lourdes in Rome; that story of Bernadette is so delightful."

However, the scene which followed was so extraordinary that for a long time Pierre remained overcome by it. He had beheld never-to-be-forgotten idolatry at Lourdes, incidents of naïve faith and frantic religious passion which yet made him quiver with alarm and grief. But the crowds rushing on the grotto, the sick dying of divine love before the Virgin's statue, the multitudes delirious with the contagion of the miraculous — nothing of all that gave an idea of the blast of madness which suddenly inflamed the pilgrims at the feet of the Pope. Some bishops, superiors of religious orders, and other delegates of various kinds had stepped forward to deposit near the throne the offerings which they brought from the whole Catholic world, the universal "collection" of St. Peter's Pence. It was the voluntary tribute of the

nations to their sovereign: silver, gold, and bank notes in purses, bags, and cases. Ladies came and fell on their knees to offer silk and velvet alms-bags which they themselves had embroidered. Others had caused the note cases which they tendered to be adorned with the monogram of Leo XIII in diamonds. And at one moment the enthusiasm became so intense that several women stripped themselves of their adornments, flung their own purses on to the platform, and emptied their pockets even to the very coppers they had about them. One lady, tall and slender, very beautiful and very dark, wrenched her watch from about her neck, pulled off her rings, and threw everything upon the carpet. Had it been possible, they would have torn away their flesh to pluck out their love-burnt hearts and fling them likewise to the demi-god. They would even have flung themselves, have given themselves without reserve. It was a rain of presents, an explosion of the passion which impels one to strip oneself for the object of one's cult, happy at having nothing of one's own that shall not belong to him. And meantime the clamour grew, vivats and shrill cries of adoration arose amidst pushing and jostling of increased violence, one and all yielding to the irresistible desire to kiss the idol!

But a signal was given, and Leo XIII made haste to quit the throne and take his place in the *cortège* in order to return to his apartments. The Swiss Guards energetically thrust back the throng, seeking to open a way through the three halls. But at sight of his Holiness's departure a lamentation of despair arose and spread, as if heaven had suddenly closed again

and shut out those who had not yet been able to approach. What a frightful disappointment — to have beheld the living manifestation of the Deity and to see it disappear before gaining salvation by just touching it! So terrible became the scramble, so extraordinary the confusion, that the Swiss Guards were swept away. And ladies were seen to dart after the Pope, to drag themselves on all fours over the marble slabs and kiss his footprints and lap up the dust of his steps! The tall dark lady suddenly fell at the edge of the platform, raised a loud shriek, and fainted; and two gentlemen of the committee had to hold her so that she might not do herself an injury in the convulsions of the hysterical fit which had come upon her. Another, a plump *blonde*, was wildly, desperately kissing one of the golden arms of the throne-chair, on which the old man's poor, bony elbow had just rested. And others, on seeing her, came to dispute possession, seized both arms, gilding and velvet, and pressed their mouths to wood-work or upholstery, their bodies meanwhile shaking with their sobs. Force had to be employed in order to drag them away.

When it was all over Pierre went off, emerging as it were from a painful dream, sick at heart, and with his mind revolting. And again he encountered Nani's glance, which never left him. "It was a superb ceremony, was it not?" said the prelate. "It consoles one for many iniquities."

"Yes, no doubt; but what idolatry!" the young priest murmured despite himself.

Nani, however, merely smiled, as if he had not heard the last word. At that same moment the two

French ladies whom he had provided with tickets came up to thank him, and Pierre was surprised to recognise the mother and daughter whom he had met at the Catacombs. Charming, bright, and healthy as they were, their enthusiasm was only for the spectacle: they declared that they were well pleased at having seen it — that it was really astonishing, unique.

As the crowd slowly withdrew Pierre all at once felt a tap on his shoulder, and, on turning his head, perceived Narcisse Habert, who also was very enthusiastic. "I made signs to you, my dear Abbé," said he, "but you didn't see me. Ah! how superb was the expression of that dark woman who fell rigid beside the platform with her arms outstretched. She reminded me of a masterpiece of one of the primitives, Cimabue, Giotto, or Fra Angelico. And the others, those who devoured the chair arms with their kisses, what suavity, beauty, and love! I never miss these ceremonies: there are always some fine scenes, perfect pictures, in which souls reveal themselves."

The long stream of pilgrims slowly descended the stairs, and Pierre, followed by Nani and Narcisse, who had begun to chat, tried to bring the ideas which were tumultuously throbbing in his brain into something like order. There was certainly grandeur and beauty in that Pope who had shut himself up in his Vatican, and who, the more he became a purely moral, spiritual authority, freed from all terrestrial cares, had grown in the adoration and awe of mankind. Such a flight into the ideal deeply stirred Pierre, whose dream of rejuvenated Christianity rested on the idea of the supreme Head of the Church exer-

cising only a purified, spiritual authority. He had just seen what an increase of majesty and power was in that way gained by the Supreme Pontiff of the spheres beyond, at whose feet the women fainted, and behind whom they beheld a vision of the Deity. But at the same moment the pecuniary side of the question had risen before him and spoilt his joy. If the enforced relinquishment of the temporal power had exalted the Pope by freeing him from the worries of a petty sovereignty which was ever threatened, the need of money still remained like a chain about his feet tying him to earth. As he could not accept the proffered subvention of the Italian Government,¹ there was certainly in the Peter's Pence a means of placing the Holy See above all material cares, provided, however, that this Peter's Pence were really the Catholic *sou*, the mite of each believer, levied on his daily income and sent direct to Rome. Such a voluntary tribute paid by the flock to its pastor would, moreover, suffice for the wants of the Church if each of the 250,000,000 of Catholics gave his or her *sou* every week. In this wise the Pope, indebted to each and all of his children, would be indebted to none in particular. A *sou* was so little and so easy to give, and there was also something so touching about the idea. But, unhappily, things were not worked in that way; the great majority of Catholics gave nothing whatever, while the rich ones sent large sums from motives of political passion; and a particular objection was

¹ 110,000*l.* per annum. It has never been accepted, and the accumulations lapse to the Government every five years, and cannot afterwards be recovered. — *Trans.*

that the gifts were centralised in the hands of certain bishops and religious orders, so that these became ostensibly the benefactors of the papacy, the indispensable cashiers from whom it drew the sinews of life. The lowly and humble whose mites filled the collection boxes were, so to say, suppressed, and the Pope became dependent on the intermediaries, and was compelled to act cautiously with them, listen to their remonstrances, and even at times obey their passions, lest the stream of gifts should suddenly dry up. And so, although he was disburdened of the dead weight of the temporal power, he was not free; but remained the tributary of his clergy, with interests and appetites around him which he must needs satisfy. And Pierre remembered the "Grotto of Lourdes" in the Vatican gardens, and the banner which he had just seen, and he knew that the Lourdes fathers levied 200,000 francs a year on their receipts to send them as a present to the Holy Father. Was not that the chief reason of their great power? He quivered, and suddenly became conscious that, do what he might, he would be defeated, and his book would be condemned.

At last, as he was coming out on to the Piazza of St. Peter's, he heard Narcisse asking Monsignor Nani: "Indeed! Do you really think that to-day's gifts exceeded that figure?"

"Yes, more than three millions,¹ I'm convinced of it," the prelate replied.

¹ All the amounts given on this and the following pages are calculated in francs. The reader will bear in mind that a million francs is equivalent to 40,000*l.* — *Trans.*

For a moment the three men halted under the right-hand colonnade and gazed at the vast, sunlit piazza where the pilgrims were spreading out like little black specks hurrying hither and thither — an ant-hill, as it were, in revolution.

Three millions! The words had rung in Pierre's ears. And, raising his head, he gazed at the Vatican, all golden in the sunlight against the expanse of blue sky, as if he wished to penetrate its walls and follow the steps of Leo XIII returning to his apartments. He pictured him laden with those millions, with his weak, slender arms pressed to his breast, carrying the silver, the gold, the bank notes, and even the jewels which the women had flung him. And almost unconsciously the young priest spoke aloud: "What will he do with those millions? Where is he taking them?"

Narcisse and even Nani could not help being amused by this strangely expressed curiosity. It was the young *attaché* who replied. "Why, his Holiness is taking them to his room; or, at least, is having them carried there before him. Didn't you see two persons of his suite picking up everything and filling their pockets? And now his Holiness has shut himself up quite alone; and if you could see him you would find him counting and recounting his treasure with cheerful care, ranging the rolls of gold in good order, slipping the bank notes into envelopes in equal quantities, and then putting everything away in hiding-places which are only known to himself."

While his companion was speaking Pierre again raised his eyes to the windows of the Pope's apart-

ments, as if to follow the scene. Moreover, Narcisse gave further explanations, asserting that the money was put away in a certain article of furniture, standing against the right-hand wall in the Holy Father's bedroom. Some people, he added, also spoke of a writing table or secrétaire with deep drawers; and others declared that the money slumbered in some big padlocked trunks stored away in the depths of the alcove, which was very roomy. Of course, on the left side of the passage leading to the Archives there was a large room occupied by a general cashier and a monumental safe; but the funds kept there were simply those of the Patrimony of St. Peter, the administrative receipts of Rome; whereas the Peter's Pence money, the voluntary donations of Christendom, remained in the hands of Leo XIII: he alone knew the exact amount of that fund, and lived alone with its millions, which he disposed of like an absolute master, rendering account to none. And such was his prudence that he never left his room when the servants cleaned and set it in order. At the utmost he would consent to remain on the threshold of the adjoining apartment in order to escape the dust. And whenever he meant to absent himself for a few hours, to go down into the gardens, for instance, he double-locked the doors and carried the keys away with him, never confiding them to another.

At this point Narcisse paused and, turning to Nani, inquired: "Is not that so, Monsignor? These are things known to all Rome."

The prelate, ever smiling and wagging his head without expressing either approval or disapproval,

had begun to study on Pierre's face the effect of these curious stories. "No doubt, no doubt," he responded; "so many things are said! I know nothing myself, but you seem to be certain of it all, Monsieur Habert."

"Oh!" resumed the other, "I don't accuse his Holiness of sordid avarice, such as is rumoured. Some fabulous stories are current, stories of coffers full of gold in which the Holy Father is said to plunge his hands for hours at a time; treasures which he has heaped up in corners for the sole pleasure of counting them over and over again. Nevertheless, one may well admit that his Holiness is somewhat fond of money for its own sake, for the pleasure of handling it and setting it in order when he happens to be alone—and after all that is a very excusable mania in an old man who has no other pastime. But I must add that he is yet fonder of money for the social power which it brings, the decisive help which it will give to the Holy See in the future, if the latter desires to triumph."

These words evoked the lofty figure of a wise and prudent Pope, conscious of modern requirements, inclined to utilise the powers of the century in order to conquer it, and for this reason venturing on business and speculation. As it happened, the treasure bequeathed by Pius IX had nearly been lost in a financial disaster, but ever since that time Leo XIII had sought to repair the breach and make the treasure whole again, in order that he might leave it to his successor intact and even enlarged. Economical he certainly was, but he saved for the needs of the

Church, which, as he knew, increased day by day; and money was absolutely necessary if Atheism was to be met and fought in the sphere of the schools, institutions, and associations of all sorts. Without money, indeed, the Church would become a vassal at the mercy of the civil powers, the Kingdom of Italy and other Catholic states; and so, although he liberally helped every enterprise which might contribute to the triumph of the Faith, Leo XIII had a contempt for all expenditure without an object, and treated himself and others with stern closeness. Personally, he had no needs. At the outset of his pontificate he had set his small private patrimony apart from the rich patrimony of St. Peter, refusing to take aught from the latter for the purpose of assisting his relatives. Never had pontiff displayed less nepotism: his three nephews and his two nieces had remained poor—in fact, in great pecuniary embarrassment. Still he listened neither to complaints nor accusations, but remained inflexible, proudly resolved to bequeath the sinews of life, the invincible weapon money, to the popes of future times, and therefore vigorously defending the millions of the Holy See against the desperate covetousness of one and all.

“But, after all, what are the receipts and expenses of the Holy See?” inquired Pierre.

In all haste Nani again made his amiable, evasive gesture. “Oh! I am altogether ignorant in such matters,” he replied. “Ask Monsieur Habert, who is so well informed.”

“For my part,” responded the *attaché*, “I simply

know what is known to all the embassies here, the matters which are the subject of common report. With respect to the receipts there is, first of all, the treasure left by Pius IX, some twenty millions, invested in various ways and formerly yielding about a million a year in interest. But, as I said before, a disaster happened, and there must then have been a falling off in the income. Still, nowadays it is reported that nearly all deficiencies have been made good. Well, besides the regular income from the invested money, a few hundred thousand francs are derived every year from chancellery dues, patents of nobility, and all sorts of little fees paid to the Congregations. However, as the annual expenses exceed seven millions, it has been necessary to find quite six millions every year; and certainly it is the Peter's Pence Fund that has supplied, not the six millions, perhaps, but three or four of them, and with these the Holy See has speculated in the hope of doubling them and making both ends meet. It would take me too long just now to relate the whole story of these speculations, the first huge gains, then the catastrophe which almost swept everything away, and finally the stubborn perseverance which is gradually supplying all deficiencies. However, if you are anxious on the subject, I will one day tell you all about it."

Pierre had listened with deep interest. "Six millions—even four!" he exclaimed, "what does the Peter's Pence Fund bring in, then?"

"Oh! I can only repeat that nobody has ever known the exact figures. In former times the Catholic Press published lists giving the amounts of different

offerings, and in this way one could frame an approximate estimate. But the practice must have been considered unadvisable, for no documents nowadays appear, and it is absolutely impossible for people to form any real idea of what the Pope receives. He alone knows the correct amount, keeps the money, and disposes of it with absolute authority. Still I believe that in good years the offerings have amounted to between four and five millions. Originally France contributed one-half of the sum; but nowadays it certainly gives much less. Then come Belgium and Austria, England and Germany. As for Spain and Italy — oh! Italy —”

Narcisse paused and smiled at Monsignor Nani, who was wagging his head with the air of a man delighted at learning some extremely curious things of which he had previously had no idea.

“Oh, you may proceed, you may proceed, my dear son,” said he.

“Well, then, Italy scarcely distinguishes itself. If the Pope had to provide for his living out of the gifts of the Italian Catholics there would soon be a famine at the Vatican. Far from helping him, indeed, the Roman nobility has cost him dear; for one of the chief causes of his pecuniary losses was his folly in lending money to the princes who speculated. It is really only from France and England that rich people, noblemen and so forth, have sent royal gifts to the imprisoned and martyred Pontiff. Among others there was an English nobleman who came to Rome every year with a large offering, the outcome of a vow which he had made in the hope that Heaven would

cure his unhappy idiot son. And, of course, I don't refer to the extraordinary harvest garnered during the sacerdotal and the episcopal jubilees — the forty millions which then fell at his Holiness's feet."

"And the expenses?" asked Pierre.

"Well, as I told you, they amount to about seven millions. We may reckon two of them for the pensions paid to former officials of the pontifical government who were unwilling to take service under Italy; but I must add that this source of expense is diminishing every year as people die off and their pensions become extinguished. Then, broadly speaking, we may put down one million for the Italian sees, another for the Secretariate and the Nunciatures, and another for the Vatican. In this last sum I include the expenses of the pontifical Court, the military establishment, the museums, and the repair of the palace and the Basilica. Well, we have reached five millions, and the two others may be set down for the various subsidised enterprises, the Propaganda, and particularly the schools, which Leo XIII, with great practical good sense, subsidises very handsomely, for he is well aware that the battle and the triumph be in that direction — among the children who will be men to-morrow, and who will then defend their mother the Church, provided that they have been inspired with horror for the abominable doctrines of the age."

A spell of silence ensued, and the three men slowly paced the majestic colonnade. The swarming crowd had gradually disappeared, leaving the piazza empty, so that only the obelisk and the twin fountains now arose from the burning desert of symmetrical paving;

whilst on the entablature of the porticus across the square a noble line of motionless statues stood out in the bright sunlight. And Pierre, with his eyes still raised to the Pope's windows, again fancied that he could see Leo XIII amidst all the streaming gold that had been spoken of, his whole, white, pure figure, his poor, waxen, transparent form steeped amidst those millions which he hid and counted and expended for the glory of God alone. "And so," murmured the young priest, "he has no anxiety, he is not in any pecuniary embarrassment."

"Pecuniary embarrassment!" exclaimed Monsignor Nani, his patience so sorely tried by the remark that he could no longer retain his diplomatic reserve. "Oh! my dear son! Why, when Cardinal Mocenni, the treasurer, goes to his Holiness every month, his Holiness always gives him the sum he asks for; he would give it, and be able to give it, however large it might be! His Holiness has certainly had the wisdom to effect great economies; the Treasure of St. Peter is larger than ever. Pecuniary embarrassment, indeed! Why, if a misfortune should occur, and the Sovereign Pontiff were to make a direct appeal to all his children, the Catholics of the entire world, do you know that in that case a thousand millions would fall at his feet just like the gold and the jewels which you saw raining on the steps of his throne just now?" Then suddenly calming himself and recovering his pleasant smile, Nani added: "At least, that is what I sometimes hear said; for, personally, I know nothing, absolutely nothing; and it is fortunate that Monsieur Habert should have been here to give you in-

formation. Ah! Monsieur Habert, Monsieur Habert! Why, I fancied that you were always in the skies absorbed in your passion for art, and far removed from all base mundane interests! But you really understand these things like a banker or a notary. Nothing escapes you, nothing. It is wonderful."

Narcisse must have felt the sting of the prelate's delicate sarcasm. At bottom, beneath this make-believe Florentine all-angelicalness, with long curly hair and mauve eyes which grew dim with rapture at sight of a Botticelli, there was a thoroughly practical, business-like young man, who took admirable care of his fortune and was even somewhat miserly. However, he contented himself with lowering his eyelids and assuming a languorous air. "Oh!" said he, "I'm all reverie; my soul is elsewhere."

"At all events," resumed Nani, turning towards Pierre, "I am very glad that you were able to see such a beautiful spectacle. A few more such opportunities and you will understand things far better than you would from all the explanations in the world. Don't miss the grand ceremony at St. Peter's to-morrow. It will be magnificent, and will give you food for useful reflection; I'm sure of it. And now allow me to leave you, delighted at seeing you in such a fit frame of mind."

Darting a last glance at Pierre, Nani seemed to have observed with pleasure the weariness and uncertainty which were paling his face. And when the prelate had gone off, and Narcisse also had taken leave with a gentle hand-shake, the young priest felt the ire of protest rising within him. What fit frame of mind

did Nani mean? Did that man hope to weary him and drive him to despair by throwing him into collision with obstacles, so that he might afterwards overcome him with perfect ease? For the second time Pierre became suddenly and briefly conscious of the stealthy efforts which were being made to invest and crush him. But, believing as he did in his own strength of resistance, pride filled him with disdain. Again he swore that he would never yield, never withdraw his book, no matter what might happen. And then, before crossing the piazza, he once more raised his eyes to the windows of the Vatican, all his impressions crystallising in the thought of that much-needed money which like a last bond still attached the Pope to earth. Its chief evil doubtless lay in the manner in which it was provided; and if indeed the only question were to devise an improved method of collection, his dream of a pope who should be all soul, the bond of love, the spiritual leader of the world, would not be seriously affected. At this thought, Pierre felt comforted and was unwilling to look on things otherwise than hopefully, moved as he was by the extraordinary scene which he had just beheld, that feeble old man shining forth like the symbol of human deliverance, obeyed and venerated by the multitudes, and alone among all men endowed with the moral omnipotence that might at last set the reign of charity and peace on earth.

For the ceremony on the following day, it was fortunate that Pierre held a private ticket which admitted him to a reserved gallery, for the scramble at the entrances to the Basilica proved terrible. The mass,

which the Pope was to celebrate in person, was fixed for ten o'clock, but people began to pour into St. Peter's four hours earlier, as soon, indeed, as the gates had been thrown open. The three thousand members of the International Pilgrimage were increased tenfold by the arrival of all the tourists in Italy, who had hastened to Rome eager to witness one of those great pontifical functions which nowadays are so rare. Moreover, the devotees and partisans whom the Holy See numbered in Rome itself and in other great cities of the kingdom, helped to swell the throng, all alacrity at the prospect of a demonstration. Judging by the tickets distributed, there would be a concourse of 40,000 people. And, indeed, at nine o'clock, when Pierre crossed the piazza on his way to the Canons' Entrance in the Via Santa Marta, where the holders of pink tickets were admitted, he saw the portico of the façade still thronged with people who were but slowly gaining admittance, while several gentlemen in evening dress, members of some Catholic association, bestirred themselves to maintain order with the help of a detachment of Pontifical Guards. Nevertheless, violent quarrels broke out in the crowd, and blows were exchanged amidst the involuntary scramble. Some people were almost stifled, and two women were carried off half crushed to death.

A disagreeable surprise met Pierre on his entry into the Basilica. The huge edifice was draped; coverings of old red damask with bands of gold swathed the columns and pilasters, seventy-five feet high; even the aisles were hung with the same old and faded silk;

and the shrouding of those pompous marbles, of all the superb dazzling ornamentation of the church he spoke a very singular taste, a tawdry affectation of pomposity, extremely wretched in its effect. However, he was yet more amazed on seeing that even the statue of St. Peter was clad, costumed like a living pope in sumptuous pontifical vestments, with a tiara on its metal head. He had never imagined that people could garment statues either for their glory or for the pleasure of the eyes, and the result seemed to him disastrous.

The Pope was to say mass at the papal altar of the Confession, the high altar which stands under the dome. On a platform at the entrance of the left-hand transept was the throne on which he would afterwards take his place. Then, on either side of the nave, tribunes had been erected for the choristers of the Sistine Chapel, the Corps Diplomatique, the Knights of Malta, the Roman nobility, and other guests of various kinds. And, finally, in the centre, before the altar, there were three rows of benches covered with red rugs, the first for the cardinals and the other two for the bishops and the prelates of the pontifical court. All the rest of the congregation was to remain standing.

Ah! that huge concert-audience, those thirty, forty thousand believers from here, there, and everywhere, inflamed with curiosity, passion, or faith, bestirring themselves, jostling one another, rising on tip-toe to see the better! The clamour of a human sea arose, the crowd was as gay and familiar as if it had found itself in some heavenly theatre where it was allowable for one to chat aloud and recreate oneself with the

spectacle of religious pomp! At first Pierre was thunderstruck, he who only knew of nervous, silent kneeling in the depths of dim cathedrals, who was not accustomed to that religion of light, whose brilliancy transformed a religious celebration into a morning festivity. Around him, in the same tribune as himself, were gentlemen in dress-coats and ladies gowned in black, carrying glasses as in an opera-house. There were German and English women, and numerous Americans, all more or less charming, displaying the grace of thoughtless, chirruping birds. In the tribune of the Roman nobility on the left he recognised Benedetta and Donna Serafina, and there the simplicity of the regulation attire for ladies was relieved by large lace veils rivalling one another in richness and elegance. Then on the right was the tribune of the Knights of Malta, where the Grand Master stood amidst a group of commanders: while across the nave rose the diplomatic tribune where Pierre perceived the ambassadors of all the Catholic nations, resplendent in gala uniforms covered with gold lace. However, the young priest's eyes were ever returning to the crowd, the great surging throng in which the three thousand pilgrims were lost amidst the multitude of other spectators. And yet as the Basilica was so vast that it could easily contain eighty thousand people, it did not seem to be more than half full. People came and went along the aisles and took up favourable positions without impediment. Some could be seen gesticulating, and calls rang out above the ceaseless rumble of voices. From the lofty windows of plain white glass fell broad sheets of sunlight,

which set a gory glow upon the faded damask hangings, and these cast a reflection as of fire upon all the tumultuous, feverish, impatient faces. The multitude of candles, and the seven-and-eighty lamps of the Confession paled to such a degree that they seemed but glimmering night-lights in the blinding radiance; and everything proclaimed the worldly gala of the imperial Deity of Roman pomp.

All at once there came a premature shock of delight, a false alert. Cries burst forth and circulated through the crowd: "*Eccolo! eccolo!* Here he comes!" And then there was pushing and jostling, eddying which made the human sea whirl and surge, all craning their necks, raising themselves to their full height, darting forward in a frenzied desire to see the Holy Father and the *cortège*. But only a detachment of Noble Guards marched by and took up position right and left of the altar. A flattering murmur accompanied them, their fine impassive bearing with its exaggerated military stiffness, provoking the admiration of the throng. An American woman declared that they were superb-looking fellows; and a Roman lady gave an English friend some particulars about the select corps to which they belonged. Formerly, said she, young men of the aristocracy had greatly sought the honour of forming part of it, for the sake of wearing its rich uniform and caracoling in front of the ladies. But recruiting was now such a difficult matter that one had to content oneself with good-looking young men of doubtful or ruined nobility, whose only care was for the meagre "pay" which just enabled them to live.

When another quarter of an hour of chatting and

scrutinising had elapsed, the papal *cortège* at last made its appearance, and no sooner was it seen than applause burst forth as in a theatre — furious applause it was which rose and rolled along under the vaulted ceilings, suggesting the acclamations which ring out when some popular, idolised actor makes his entry on the stage. As in a theatre, too, everything had been very skilfully contrived so as to produce all possible effect amidst the magnificent scenery of the Basilica. The *cortège* was formed in the wings, that is in the Cappella della Pietà, the first chapel of the right aisle, and in order to reach it, the Holy Father, coming from his apartments by the way of the Chapel of the Blessed Sacrament, had been stealthily carried behind the hangings of the aisle which served the purpose of a drop-scene. Awaiting him in all readiness in the Cappella della Pietà were the cardinals, archbishops, and bishops, the whole pontifical prelacy, hierarchically classified and grouped. And then, as at a signal from a ballet master, the *cortège* made its entry, reaching the nave and ascending it in triumph from the closed Porta Santa to the altar of the Confession. On either hand were the rows of spectators whose applause at the sight of so much magnificence grew louder and louder as their delirious enthusiasm increased.

It was the *cortège* of the olden solemnities, the cross and sword, the Swiss Guard in full uniform, the valets in scarlet simars, the Knights of the Cape and the Sword in Renaissance costumes, the Canons in rochets of lace, the superiors of the religious communities, the apostolic prothonotaries, the archbishops, and bishops,

all the pontifical prelates in violet silk, the cardinals, each wearing the *cappa magna* and draped in purple, walking solemnly two by two with long intervals between each pair. Finally, around his Holiness were grouped the officers of the military household, the chamber prelates, Monsignor the Majordomo, Monsignor the Grand Chamberlain, and all the other high dignitaries of the Vatican, with the Roman prince assistant of the throne, the traditional, symbolical defender of the Church. And on the *sedia gestatoria*, screened by the *flabelli* with their lofty triumphal fans of feathers and carried on high by the bearers in red tunics brodered with silk, sat the Pope, clad in the sacred vestments which he had assumed in the Chapel of the Blessed Sacrament, the amict, the alb, the stole, and the white chasuble and white mitre enriched with gold, two gifts of extraordinary sumptuousness that had come from France. And, as his Holiness drew near, all hands were raised and clapped yet more loudly amidst the waves of living sunlight which streamed from the lofty windows.

Then a new and different impression of Leo XIII came to Pierre. The Pope, as he now beheld him, was no longer the familiar, tired, inquisitive old man, leaning on the arm of a talkative prelate as he strolled through the loveliest gardens in the world. He no longer recalled the Holy Father, in red cape and papal cap, giving a paternal welcome to a pilgrimage which brought him a fortune. He was here the Sovereign Pontiff, the all-powerful Master whom Christendom adored. His slim waxen form seemed to have stiffened within his white vestments, heavy with

golden broidery, as in a reliquary of precious metal; and he retained a rigid, haughty, hieratic attitude, like that of some idol, gilded, withered for centuries past by the smoke of sacrifices. Amidst the mournful stiffness of his face only his eyes lived—eyes like black sparkling diamonds gazing afar, beyond earth, into the infinite. He gave not a glance to the crowd, he lowered his eyes neither to right nor to left, but remained soaring in the heavens, ignoring all that took place at his feet.

And as that seemingly embalmed idol, deaf and blind, in spite of the brilliancy of his eyes, was carried through the frantic multitude which it appeared neither to hear nor to see, it assumed fearsome majesty, disquieting grandeur, all the rigidity of dogma, all the immobility of tradition exhumed with its *fasciae* which alone kept it erect. Still Pierre fancied he could detect that the Pope was ill and weary, suffering from the attack of fever which Nani had spoken of when glorifying the courage of that old man of eighty-four, whom strength of soul alone now kept alive.

The service began. Alighting from the *sedia gestatoria* before the altar of the Confession, his Holiness slowly celebrated a low mass, assisted by four prelates and the pro-prefect of the ceremonies. When the time came for washing his fingers, Monsignor the Majordomo and Monsignor the Grand Chamberlain, accompanied by two cardinals, poured the water on his august hands; and shortly before the elevation of the host all the prelates of the pontifical court, each holding a lighted taper, came and knelt around the altar. There was a solemn moment, the forty thousand

believers there assembled shuddered as if they could feel the terrible yet delicious blast of the invisible sweeping over them when during the elevation the silver clarions sounded the famous chorus of angels which invariably makes some women swoon. Almost immediately an aërial chant descended from the cupola, from a lofty gallery where one hundred and twenty choristers were concealed, and the enraptured multitude marvelled as though the angels had indeed responded to the clarion call. The voices descended, taking their flight under the vaulted ceilings with the airy sweetness of celestial harps; then in suave harmony they died away, reascended to the heavens as with a faint flapping of wings. And, after the mass, his Holiness, still standing at the altar, in person started the *Te Deum*, which the singers of the Sixtine Chapel and the other choristers took up, each party chanting a verse alternately. But soon the whole congregation joined them, forty thousand voices were raised, and a hymn of joy and glory spread through the vast nave with incomparable splendour of effect. And then the scene became one of extraordinary magnificence: there was Bernini's triumphal, flowery, gilded *baldacchino*, surrounded by the whole pontifical court with the lighted tapers showing like starry constellations, there was the Sovereign Pontiff in the centre, radiant like a planet in his gold-broidered chasuble, there were the benches crowded with cardinals in purple and archbishops and bishops in violet silk, there were the tribunes glittering with official finery, the gold lace of the diplomatists, the variegated uniforms of foreign officers, and then there was

the throng flowing and eddying on all sides, rolling billows after billows of heads from the most distant depths of the Basilica. And the hugeness of the temple increased one's amazement; and even the glorious hymn which the multitude repeated became colossal, ascended like a tempest blast amidst the great marble tombs, the superhuman statues and gigantic pillars, till it reached the vast vaulted heavens of stone, and penetrated into the firmament of the cupola where the Infinite seemed to open resplendent with the gold-work of the mosaics.

A long murmur of voices followed the *Te Deum*, whilst Leo XIII, after donning the tiara in lieu of the mitre, and exchanging the chasuble for the pontifical cope, went to occupy his throne on the platform at the entry of the left transept. He thence dominated the whole assembly, through which a quiver sped when after the prayers of the ritual, he once more rose erect. Beneath the symbolic, triple crown, in the golden sheathing of his cope, he seemed to have grown taller. Amidst sudden and profound silence, which only feverish heart-beats interrupted, he raised his arm with a very noble gesture and pronounced the papal benediction in a slow, loud, full voice, which seemed, as it were, the very voice of the Deity, so greatly did its power astonish one, coming from such waxen lips, from such a bloodless, lifeless frame. And the effect was prodigious: as soon as the *cortège* reformed to return whence it had come, applause again burst forth, a frenzy of enthusiasm which the clapping of hands could no longer content. Acclamations resounded and gradually gained upon the whole multi-

tude. They began among a group of ardent partisans stationed near the statue of St. Peter: "*Evviva il Papa-Rè! evviva il Papa-Rè!* Long live the Pope-King!" as the *cortège* went by the shout rushed along like leaping fire, inflaming heart after heart, and at last springing from every mouth in a thunderous protest against the theft of the states of the Church. All the faith, all the love of those believers, over-excited by the regal spectacle they had just beheld, returned once more to the dream, to the rageful desire that the Pope should be both King and Pontiff, master of men's bodies as he was of their souls — in one word, the absolute sovereign of the earth. Therein lay the only truth, the only happiness, the only salvation! Let all be given to him, both mankind and the world! "*Evviva il Papa-Rè! evviva il Papa-Rè!* Long live the Pope-King!"

Ah! that cry, that cry of war which had caused so many errors and so much bloodshed, that cry of self-abandonment and blindness which, realised, would have brought back the old ages of suffering, it shocked Pierre, and impelled him in all haste to quit the tribune where he was in order that he might escape the contagion of idolatry. And while the *cortège* still went its way and the deafening clamour of the crowd continued, he for a moment followed the left aisle amidst the general scramble. This, however, made him despair of reaching the street, and anxious to escape the crush of the general departure, it occurred to him to profit by a door which he saw open and which led him into a vestibule, whence ascended the steps conducting to the dome. A sacristan standing

in the doorway, both bewildered and delighted at the demonstration, looked at him for a moment, hesitating whether he should stop him or not. However, the sight of the young priest's cassock combined with his own emotion rendered the man tolerant. Pierre was allowed to pass, and at once began to climb the staircase as rapidly as he could, in order that he might flee farther and farther away, ascend higher and yet higher into peace and silence.

And the silence suddenly became profound, the walls stifled the cry of the multitude. The staircase was easy and light, with broad paved steps turning within a sort of tower. When Pierre came out upon the roofs of nave and aisles, he was delighted to find himself in the bright sunlight and the pure keen air which blew there as in the open country. And it was with astonishment that he gazed upon the huge expanse of lead, zinc, and stone-work, a perfect aerial city living a life of its own under the blue sky. He saw cupolas, spires, terraces, even houses and gardens, houses bright with flowers, the residences of the workmen who live atop of the Basilica, which is ever and ever requiring repair. A little population here bestirs itself, labours, loves, eats, and sleeps. However, Pierre desired to approach the balustrade so as to get a near view of the colossal statues of the Saviour and the Apostles which surmount the façade on the side of the piazza. These giants, some nineteen feet in height, are constantly being mended; their arms, legs, and heads, into which the atmosphere is ever eating, nowadays only hold together by the help of cement, bars, and hooks. And having examined them, Pierre

was leaning forward to glance at the Vatican's jumble of ruddy roofs, when it seemed to him that the shout from which he had fled was rising from the piazza, and thereupon, in all haste, he resumed his ascent within the pillar conducting to the dome. There was first a staircase, and then came some narrow, oblique passages, inclines intersected by a few steps, between the inner and outer walls of the cupola. Yielding to curiosity, Pierre pushed a door open, and suddenly found himself inside the Basilica again, at nearly 200 feet from the ground. A narrow gallery there ran round the dome just above the frieze, on which, in letters five feet high, appeared the famous inscription: *Tu es Petrus et super hanc petram ædificabo ecclesiam meam et tibi dabo claves regni cælorum.*¹ And then, as Pierre leant over to gaze into the fearful cavity beneath him and the wide openings of nave, and aisles, and transepts, the cry, the delirious cry of the multitude, yet clamorously swarming below, struck him full in the face. He fled once more; but, higher up, yet a second time he pushed another door open and found another gallery, one perched above the windows, just where the splendid mosaics begin, and whence the crowd seemed to him lost in the depths of a dizzy abyss, altar and *buldaccchino* alike looking no larger than toys. And yet the cry of idolatry and warfare arose again, and smote him like the buffet of a tempest which gathers increase of strength the farther it rushes. So to escape it he had to climb

¹ Thou art Peter (*Petrus*) and on that rock (*Petram*) will I build my church, and to thee will I give the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven.

higher still, even to the outer gallery which encircles the lantern, hovering in the very heavens.

How delightful was the relief which that bath of air and sunlight at first brought him! Above him now there only remained the ball of gilt copper into which emperors and queens have ascended, as is testified by the pompous inscriptions in the passages; a hollow ball it is, where the voice crashes like thunder, where all the sounds of space reverberate. As he emerged on the side of the apse, his eyes at first plunged into the papal gardens, whose clumps of trees seemed mere bushes almost level with the soil; and he could retrace his recent stroll among them, the broad *parterre* looking like a faded Smyrna rug, the large wood showing the deep glaucous greenery of a stagnant pool. Then there were the kitchen garden and the vineyard easily identified and tended with care. The fountains, the observatory, the casino, where the Pope spent the hot days of summer, showed merely like little white spots in those undulating grounds, walled in like any other estate, but with the fearsome rampart of the fourth Leo, which yet retained its fortress-like aspect. However, Pierre took his way round the narrow gallery and abruptly found himself in front of Rome, a sudden and immense expanse, with the distant sea on the west, the uninterrupted mountain chains on the east and the south, the Roman Campagna stretching to the horizon like a bare and greenish desert, while the city, the Eternal City, was spread out at his feet. Never before had space impressed him so majestically. Rome was there, as a bird might see it, within the glance, as distinct as some geographical plan executed in relief. To

think of it, such a past, such a history, so much grandeur, and Rome so dwarfed and contracted by distance! Houses as lilliputian and as pretty as toys; and the whole a mere mouldy speck upon the earth's face! What impassioned Pierre was that he could at a glance understand the divisions of Rome: the antique city yonder with the Capitol, the Forum, and the Palatine; the papal city in that Borgo which he overlooked, with St. Peter's and the Vatican gazing across the city of the middle ages — which was huddled together in the right angle described by the yellow Tiber — towards the modern city, the Quirinal of the Italian monarchy. And particularly did he remark the chalky girdle with which the new districts encompassed the ancient, central, sun-tanned quarters, thus symbolising an effort at rejuvenescence, the old heart but slowly mended, whereas the outlying limbs were renewed as if by miracle.

In that ardent noontide glow, however, Pierre no longer beheld the pure ethereal Rome which had met his eyes on the morning of his arrival in the delightfully soft radiance of the rising sun. That smiling, unobtrusive city, half veiled by golden mist, immersed as it were in some dream of childhood, now appeared to him flooded with a crude light, motionless, hard of outline and silent like death. The distance was as if devoured by too keen a flame, steeped in a luminous dust in which it crumbled. And against that blurred background the whole city showed with violent distinctness in great patches of light and shade, their tracery harshly conspicuous. One might have fancied oneself above some very ancient, abandoned stone

quarry, which a few clumps of trees spotted with dark green. Of the ancient city one could see the sunburnt tower of the Capitol, the black cypresses of the Palatine, and the ruins of the palace of Septimius Severus, suggesting the white osseous carcase of some fossil monster, left there by a flood. In front, was enthroned the modern city with the long, renovated buildings of the Quirinal, whose yellow walls stood forth with wondrous crudity amidst the vigorous crests of the garden trees. And to right and left on the Viminal, beyond the palace, the new districts appeared like a city of chalk and plaster mottled by innumerable windows as with a thousand touches of black ink. Then here and there were the Pincio showing like a stagnant mere, the Villa Medici uprearing its campanili, the castle of Sant' Angelo brown like rust, the spire of Santa Maria Maggiore aglow like a burning taper, the three churches of the Aventine drowsy amidst verdure, the Palazzo Farnese with its summer-baked tiles showing like old gold, the domes of the Gesù, of Sant' Andrea della Valle, of San Giovanni dei Fiorentini, and yet other domes and other domes, all in fusion, incandescent in the brazier of the heavens. And Pierre again felt a heart-pang in presence of that harsh, stern Rome, so different from the Rome of his dream, the Rome of rejuvenescence and hope, which he had fancied he had found on his first morning, but which had now faded away to give place to the immutable city of pride and domination, stubborn under the sun even unto death.

And there on high, all alone with his thoughts, Pierre suddenly understood. It was as if a dart of flaming light fell on him in that free, unbounded ex-

panse where he hovered. Had it come from the ceremony which he had just beheld, from the frantic cry of servitude still ringing in his ears? Had it come from the spectacle of that city beneath him, that city which suggested an embalmed queen still reigning amidst the dust of her tomb? He knew not; but doubtless both had acted as factors, and at all events the light which fell upon his mind was complete: he felt that Catholicism could not exist without the temporal power, that it must fatally disappear whenever it should no longer be king over this earth. A first reason of this lay in heredity, in the forces of history, the long line of the heirs of the Cæsars, the popes, the great pontiffs, in whose veins the blood of Augustus, demanding the empire of the world, had never ceased to flow. Though they might reside in the Vatican they had come from the imperial abodes on the Palatine, from the palace of Septimius Severus, and throughout the centuries their policy had ever pursued the dream of Roman mastery, of all the nations vanquished, submissive, and obedient to Rome. If its sovereignty were not universal, extending alike over bodies and over souls, Catholicism would lose its *raison d'être*; for the Church cannot recognise any empire or kingdom otherwise than politically — the emperors and the kings being purely and simply so many temporary delegates placed in charge of the nations pending the time when they shall be called upon to relinquish their trust. All the nations, all humanity, and the whole world belong to the Church to whom they have been given by God. And if real and effective possession is not hers to-day, this is only because she yields

to force, compelled to face accomplished facts, but with the formal reserve that she is in presence of guilty usurpation, that her possessions are unjustly withheld from her, and that she awaits the realisation of the promises of the Christ, who, when the time shall be accomplished, will for ever restore to her both the earth and mankind. Such is the real future city which time is to bring: Catholic Rome, sovereign of the world once more. And Rome the city forms a substantial part of the dream, Rome whose eternity has been predicted, Rome whose soil has imparted to Catholicism the inextinguishable thirst of absolute power. And thus the destiny of the papacy is linked to that of Rome, to such a point indeed that a pope elsewhere than at Rome would no longer be a Catholic pope. The thought of all this frightened Pierre; a great shudder passed through him as he leant on the light iron balustrade, gazing down into the abyss where the stern mournful city was even now crumbling away under the fierce sun.

There was, however, evidence of the facts which had dawned on him. If Pius IX and Leo XIII had resolved to imprison themselves in the Vatican, it was because necessity bound them to Rome. A pope is not free to leave the city, to be the head of the Church elsewhere; and in the same way a pope, however well he may understand the modern world, has not the right to relinquish the temporal power. This is an inalienable inheritance which he must defend, and it is moreover a question of life, peremptory, above discussion. And thus Leo XIII has retained the title of Master of the temporal dominions of the Church, and this he

has done the more readily since as a cardinal — like all the members of the Sacred College when elected — he swore that he would maintain those dominions intact. Italy may hold Rome as her capital for another century or more, but the coming popes will never cease to protest and claim their kingdom. If ever an understanding should be arrived at, it must be based on the gift of a strip of territory. Formerly, when rumours of reconciliation were current, was it not said that the papacy exacted, as a formal condition, the possession of at least the Leonine City with the neutralisation of a road leading to the sea? Nothing is not enough, one cannot start from nothing to attain to everything, whereas that *Civitas Leonina*, that bit of a city, would already be a little royal ground, and it would then only be necessary to conquer the rest, first Rome, next Italy, then the neighbouring states, and at last the whole world. Never has the Church despaired, even when, beaten and despoiled, she seemed to be at the last gasp. Never will she abdicate, never will she renounce the promises of the Christ, for she believes in a boundless future and declares herself to be both indestructible and eternal. Grant her but a pebble on which to rest her head, and she will hope to possess, first the field in which that pebble lies, and then the empire in which the field is situated. If one pope cannot achieve the recovery of the inheritance, another pope, ten, twenty other popes will continue the work. The centuries do not count. And this explains why an old man of eighty-four has undertaken colossal enterprises whose achievement requires several lives, certain as he is that his successors will

take his place, and that the work will ever and ever be carried forward and completed.

As these thoughts coursed through his mind, Pierre, overlooking that ancient city of glory and domination, so stubbornly clinging to its purple, realised that he was an imbecile with his dream of a purely spiritual pope. The notion seemed to him so different from the reality, so out of place, that he experienced a sort of shame-fraught despair. The new pope, consonant to the teachings of the Gospel, such as a purely spiritual pope reigning over souls alone, would be, was virtually beyond the ken of a Roman prelate. At thought of that papal court congealed in ritual, pride, and authority, Pierre suddenly understood what horror and repugnance such a pastor would inspire. How great must be the astonishment and contempt of the papal prelates for that singular notion of the northern mind, a pope without dominions or subjects, military household or royal honours, a pope who would be, as it were, a spirit, exercising purely moral authority, dwelling in the depths of God's temple, and governing the world solely with gestures of benediction and deeds of kindness and love! All that was but a misty Gothic invention for this Latin clergy, these priests of light and magnificence, who were certainly pious and even superstitious, but who left the Deity well sheltered within the tabernacle in order to govern in His name, according to what they considered the interests of Heaven. Thence it arose that they employed craft and artifice like mere politicians, and lived by dint of expedients amidst the great battle of human appetites, marching with the

prudent, stealthy steps of diplomatists towards the final terrestrial victory of the Christ, who, in the person of the Pope, was one day to reign over all the nations. And how stupefied must a French prelate have been — a prelate like Monseigneur Bergerot, that apostle of renunciation and charity — when he lighted amidst that world of the Vatican! How difficult must it have been for him to understand and focus things, and afterwards how great his grief at finding himself unable to come to any agreement with those men without country, without fatherland, those “internationals,” who were ever poring over the maps of both hemispheres, ever absorbed in schemes which were to bring them empire. Days and days were necessary, one needed to live in Rome, and he, Pierre himself, had only seen things clearly after a month’s sojourn, whilst labouring under the violent shock of the royal pomp of St. Peter’s, and standing face to face with the ancient city as it slumbered heavily in the sunlight and dreamt its dream of eternity.

But on lowering his eyes to the piazza in front of the Basilica he perceived the multitude, the 40,000 believers streaming over the pavement like insects. And then he thought that he could hear the cry again rising: “*Evviva il Papa-Rè! evviva il Papa-Rè!* Long live the Pope-King!” Whilst ascending those endless staircases a moment previously it had seemed to him as if the colossus of stone were quivering with the frantic shout raised beneath its ceilings. And now that he had climbed even into cloudland that shout apparently was traversing space. If the colossal pile beneath him still vibrated with it, was it not

as with a last rise of sap within its ancient walls, a reinvigoration of that Catholic blood which formerly had demanded that the pile should be a stupendous one, the veritable king of temples, and which now was striving to reanimate it with the powerful breath of life, and this at the very hour when death was beginning to fall upon its over-vast, deserted nave and aisles? The crowd was still streaming forth, filling the piazza, and Pierre's heart was wrung by frightful anguish, for that throng with its shout had just swept his last hope away. On the previous afternoon, after the reception of the pilgrimage, he had yet been able to deceive himself by overlooking the necessity for money which bound the Pope to earth in order that he might see nought but the feeble old man, all spirituality, resplendent like the symbol of moral authority. But his faith in such a pastor of the Gospel, free from all considerations of earthly wealth, and king of none other than a heavenly kingdom, had fled. Not only did the Peter's Pence impose hard servitude upon Leo XIII but he was also the prisoner of papal tradition—the eternal King of Rome, riveted to the soil of Rome, unable either to quit the city or to renounce the temporal power. The fatal end would be collapse on the spot, the dome of St. Peter's falling even as the temple of Olympian Jupiter had fallen, Catholicism strewing the grass with its ruins whilst elsewhere schism burst forth: a new faith for the new nations. Of this Pierre had a grandiose and tragical vision: he beheld his dream destroyed, his book swept away amidst that cry which spread around him as if flying to the four corners of the Catholic world:

“Evviva il Papa-Rè! evviva il Papa-Rè! Long live the Pope-King!” But even in that hour of the papacy’s passing triumph he already felt that the giant of gold and marble on which he stood was oscillating, even as totter all old and rotten societies.

At last he took his way down again, and a fresh shock of emotion came to him as he reached the roofs, that sunlit expanse of lead and zinc, large enough for the site of a town. Monsignor Nani was there, in company with the two French ladies, the mother and the daughter, both looking very happy and highly amused. No doubt the prelate had good-naturedly offered to conduct them to the dome. However, as soon as he recognised the young priest he went towards him: “Well, my dear son,” he inquired, “are you pleased? Have you been impressed, edified?” As he spoke, his searching eyes dived into Pierre’s soul, as if to ascertain the present result of his experiments. Then, satisfied with what he detected, he began to laugh softly: “Yes, yes, I see — come, you are a sensible fellow after all. I begin to think that the unfortunate affair which brought you here will have a happy ending.”

VIII

WHEN Pierre remained in the morning at the Bocanera mansion he often spent some hours in the little neglected garden which had formerly ended with a sort of colonnaded *loggia*, whence two flights of steps descended to the Tiber. This garden was a delightful, solitary nook, perfumed by the ripe fruit of the centenarian orange-trees, whose symmetrical lines were the only indication of the former pathways, now hidden beneath rank weeds. And Pierre also found there the acrid scent of the large box-shrubs growing in the old central fountain basin, which had been filled up with loose earth and rubbish.

On those luminous October mornings, full of such tender and penetrating charm, the spot was one where all the joy of living might well be savoured, but Pierre brought thither his northern dreaminess, his concern for suffering, his steadfast feeling of compassion, which rendered yet sweeter the caress of the sunlight pervading that atmosphere of love. He seated himself against the right-hand wall on a fragment of a fallen column over which a huge laurel cast a deep-black shadow, fresh and aromatic. In the antique greenish sarcophagus beside him, on which fauns offered violence to nymphs, the streamlet of water trickling from the mask incrusting in the wall, set the unchanging music

of its crystal note, whilst he read the newspapers and the letters which he received, all the communications of good Abbé Rose, who kept him informed of his mission among the wretched ones of gloomy Paris, now already steeped in fog and mud.

One morning however, Pierre unexpectedly found Benedetta seated on the fallen column which he usually made his chair. She raised a light cry of surprise on seeing him, and for a moment remained embarrassed, for she had with her his book "New Rome," which she had read once already, but had then imperfectly understood. And overcoming her embarrassment she now hastened to detain him, making him sit down beside her, and frankly owning that she had come to the garden in order to be alone and apply herself to an attentive study of the book, in the same way as some ignorant school-girl. Then they began to chat like a pair of friends, and the young priest spent a delightful hour. Although Benedetta did not speak of herself, he realised that it was her grief alone which brought her nearer to him, as if indeed her own sufferings enlarged her heart and made her think of all who suffered in the world. Patrician as she was, regarding social hierarchy as a divine law, she had never previously thought of such things, and some pages of Pierre's book greatly astonished her. What! one ought to take interest in the lowly, realise that they had the same souls and the same griefs as oneself, and seek in brotherly or sisterly fashion to make them happy? She certainly sought to acquire such an interest, but with no great success, for she secretly feared that it might lead her into sin, as it could not be right

to alter aught of the social system which had been established by God and consecrated by the Church. Charitable she undoubtedly was, wont to bestow small sums in alms, but she did not give her heart, she felt no true sympathy for the humble, belonging as she did to such a different race, which looked to a throne in heaven high above the seats of all the plebeian elect.

She and Pierre, however, found themselves on other mornings side by side in the shade of the laurels near the trickling, singing water; and he, lacking occupation, weary of waiting for a solution which seemed to recede day by day, fervently strove to animate this young and beautiful woman with some of his own fraternal feelings. He was impassioned by the idea that he was catechising Italy herself, the queen of beauty, who was still slumbering in ignorance, but who would recover all her past glory if she were to awake to the new times with soul enlarged, swelling with pity for men and things. Reading good Abbé Rose's letters to Benedetta, he made her shudder at the frightful wail of wretchedness which ascends from all great cities. With such deep tenderness in her eyes, with the happiness of love reciprocated emanating from her whole being, why should she not recognise, even as he did, that the law of love was the sole means of saving suffering humanity, which, through hatred, incurred the danger of death? And to please him she did try to believe in democracy, in the fraternal remodelling of society, but among other nations only — not at Rome, for an involuntary, gentle laugh came to her lips whenever his words evoked the idea of the poor still remaining in the Trastevere district fraternising with

those who yet dwelt in the old princely palaces. No, no, things had been as they were so long; they could not, must not, be altered! And so, after all, Pierre's pupil made little progress: she was, in reality, simply touched by the wealth of ardent love which the young priest had chastely transferred from one alone to the whole of human kind. And between him and her, as those sunlit October mornings went by, a tie of exquisite sweetness was formed; they came to love one another with deep, pure, fraternal affection, amidst the great glowing passion which consumed them both.

Then, one day, Benedetta, her elbow resting on the sarcophagus, spoke of Dario, whose name she had hitherto refrained from mentioning. Ah! poor *amico*, how circumspect and repentant he had shown himself since that fit of brutal insanity! At first, to conceal his embarrassment, he had gone to spend three days at Naples, and it was said that La Tonietta, the sentimental *demi-mondaine*, had hastened to join him there, wildly in love with him. Since his return to the mansion he had avoided all private meetings with his cousin, and scarcely saw her except at the Monday receptions, when he wore a submissive air, and with his eyes silently entreated forgiveness.

"Yesterday, however," continued Benedetta, "I met him on the staircase and gave him my hand. He understood that I was no longer angry with him and was very happy. What else could I have done? One must not be severe for ever. Besides, I do not want things to go too far between him and that woman. I want him to remember that I still love him, and am still waiting for him. Oh! he is mine, mine alone.

But alas! I cannot say the word: our affairs are in such sorry plight."

She paused, and two big tears welled into her eyes. The divorce proceedings to which she alluded had now come to a standstill, fresh obstacles ever arising to stay their course.

Pierre was much moved by her tears, for she seldom wept. She herself sometimes confessed, with her calm smile, that she did not know how to weep. But now her heart was melting, and for a moment she remained overcome, leaning on the mossy, crumbling sarcophagus, whilst the clear water falling from the gaping mouth of the tragic mask still sounded its flute-like note. And a sudden thought of death came to the priest as he saw her, so young and so radiant with beauty, half fainting beside that marble resting-place where fauns were rushing upon nymphs in a frantic bacchanal which proclaimed the omnipotence of love—that omnipotence which the ancients were fond of symbolising on their tombs as a token of life's eternity. And meantime a faint, warm breeze passed through the sunlit, silent garden, wafting hither and thither the penetrating scent of box and orange.

"One has so much strength when one loves," Pierre at last murmured.

"Yes, yes, you are right," she replied, already smiling again. "I am childish. But it is the fault of your book. It is only when I suffer that I properly understand it. But all the same I am making progress, am I not? Since you desire it, let all the poor, all those who suffer, as I do, be my brothers and sisters."

Then for a while they resumed their chat.

On these occasions Benedetta was usually the first to return to the house, and Pierre would linger alone under the laurels, vaguely dreaming of sweet, sad things. Often did he think how hard life proved for poor creatures whose only thirst was for happiness!

One Monday evening, at a quarter-past ten, only the young folks remained in Donna Serafina's reception-room. Monsignor Nani had merely put in an appearance that night, and Cardinal Sarno had just gone off.

Even Donna Serafina, in her usual seat by the fireplace, seemed to have withdrawn from the others, absorbed as she was in contemplation of the chair which the absent Morano still stubbornly left unoccupied. Chatting and laughing in front of the sofa on which sat Benedetta and Celia were Dario, Pierre, and Narcisse Habert, the last of whom had begun to twit the young Prince, having met him, so he asserted, a few days previously, in the company of a very pretty girl.

"Oh! don't deny it, my dear fellow," continued Narcisse, "for she was really superb. She was walking beside you, and you turned into a lane together—the Borgo Angelico, I think."

Dario listened smiling, quite at his ease and incapable of denying his passionate predilection for beauty. "No doubt, no doubt; it was I, I don't deny it," he responded. "Only the inferences you draw are not correct." And turning towards Benedetta, who, without a thought of jealous anxiety, wore as gay a look as himself, as though delighted that he should have enjoyed that passing pleasure of the eyes, he went on:

"It was the girl, you know, whom I found in tears six weeks ago. Yes, that bead-worker who was sobbing because the workshop was shut up, and who rushed along, all blushing, to conduct me to her parents when I offered her a bit of silver. Pierina her name is, as you, perhaps, remember."

"Oh! yes, Pierina."

"Well, since then I've met her in the street on four or five occasions. And, to tell the truth, she is so very beautiful that I've stopped and spoken to her. The other day, for instance, I walked with her as far as a manufacturer's. But she hasn't yet found any work, and she began to cry, and so, to console her a little, I kissed her. She was quite taken aback at it, but she seemed very well pleased."

At this all the others began to laugh. But suddenly Celia desisted and said very gravely, "You know, Dario, she loves you; you must not be hard on her."

Dario, no doubt, was of Celia's opinion, for he again looked at Benedetta, but with a gay toss of the head, as if to say that, although the girl might love him, he did not love her. A bead-worker indeed, a girl of the lowest classes, pooh! She might be a Venus, but she could be nothing to him. And he himself made merry over his romantic adventure, which Narcisse sought to arrange in a kind of antique sonnet: A beautiful bead-worker falling madly in love with a young prince, as fair as sunlight, who, touched by her misfortune, hands her a silver crown; then the beautiful bead-worker, quite overcome at finding him as charitable as handsome, dreaming of him incessantly, and following him everywhere, chained to his steps by a link of flame;

and finally the beautiful bead-worker, who has refused the silver crown, so entreating the handsome prince with her soft, submissive eyes, that he at last deigns to grant her the alms of his heart. This pastime greatly amused Benedetta; but Celia, with her angelic face and the air of a little girl who ought to have been ignorant of everything, remained very grave and repeated sadly, "Dario, Dario, she loves you; you must not make her suffer."

Then the Contessina, in her turn, was moved to pity. "And those poor folks are not happy!" said she.

"Oh!" exclaimed the Prince, "it's misery beyond belief. On the day she took me to the Quartiere dei Prati¹ I was quite overcome; it was awful, astonishingly awful!"

"But I remember that we promised to go to see the poor people," resumed Benedetta, "and we have done wrong in delaying our visit so long. For your studies, Monsieur l'Abbé Froment, you greatly desired to accompany us and see the poor of Rome — was that not so?"

As she spoke she raised her eyes to Pierre, who for a moment had been silent. He was much moved by her charitable thought, for he realised, by the faint quiver of her voice, that she desired to appear a docile pupil, progressing in affection for the lowly and the wretched. Moreover, his passion for his apostolate had at once returned to him. "Oh!" said he, "I shall not quit Rome without having seen those who

¹ The district of the castle meadows — see *ante*, p. 98, note. — *Trans.*

suffer, those who lack work and bread. Therein lies the malady which affects every nation; salvation can only be attained by the healing of misery. When the roots of the tree cannot find sustenance the tree dies."

"Well," resumed the Contessina, "we will fix an appointment at once; you shall come with us to the Quartiere dei Prati — Dario will take us there."

At this the Prince, who had listened to the priest with an air of stupefaction, unable to understand the simile of the tree and its roots, began to protest distressfully, "No, no, cousin, take Monsieur l'Abbé for a stroll there if it amuses you. But I've been, and don't want to go back. Why, when I got home the last time I was so upset that I almost took to my bed. No, no; such abominations are too awful — it isn't possible."

At this moment a voice, bitter with displeasure, arose from the chimney corner. Donna Serafina was emerging from her long silence. "Dario is quite right! Send your alms, my dear, and I will gladly add mine. There are other places where you might take Monsieur l'Abbé, and which it would be far more useful for him to see. With that idea of yours you would send him away with a nice recollection of our city."

Roman pride rang out amidst the old lady's bad temper. Why, indeed, show one's sores to foreigners, whose visit is possibly prompted by hostile curiosity? One always ought to look beautiful; Rome should not be shown otherwise than in the garb of glory.

Narcisse, however, had taken possession of Pierre. "It's true, my dear Abbé," said he; "I forgot to rec-

commend that stroll to you. You really must visit the new district built over the castle meadows. It's typical, and sums up all the others. And you won't lose your time there, I'll warrant you, for nowhere can you learn more about the Rome of the present day. It's extraordinary, extraordinary!" Then, addressing Benedetta, he added, "Is it decided? Shall we say to-morrow morning? You'll find the Abbé and me over there, for I want to explain matters to him beforehand, in order that he may understand them. What do you say to ten o'clock?"

Before answering him the Contessina turned towards her aunt and respectfully opposed her views. "But Monsieur l'Abbé, aunt, has met enough beggars in our streets already, so he may well see everything. Besides, judging by his book, he won't see worse things than he has seen in Paris. As he says in one passage, hunger is the same all the world over." Then, with her sensible air, she gently laid siege to Dario. "You know, Dario," said she, "you would please me very much by taking me there. We can go in the carriage and join these gentlemen. It will be a very pleasant outing for us. It is such a long time since we went out together."

It was certainly that idea of going out with Dario, of having a pretext for a complete reconciliation with him, that enchanted her; he himself realised it, and, unable to escape, he tried to treat the matter as a joke. "Ah! cousin," he said, "it will be your fault; I shall have the nightmare for a week. An excursion like that spoils all the enjoyment of life for days and days."

The mere thought made him quiver with revolt. However, laughter again rang out around him, and, in spite of Donna Serafina's mute disapproval, the appointment was finally fixed for the following morning at ten o'clock. Celia as she went off expressed deep regret that she could not form one of the party; but, with the closed candour of a budding lily, she really took interest in Pierina alone. As she reached the ante-room she whispered in her friend's ear: "Take a good look at that beauty, my dear, so as to tell me whether she is so very beautiful — beautiful beyond compare."

When Pierre met Narcisse near the Castle of Sant' Angelo on the morrow, at nine o'clock, he was surprised to find him again languid and enraptured, plunged anew in artistic enthusiasm. At first not a word was said of the excursion. Narcisse related that he had risen at sunrise in order that he might spend an hour before Bernini's "Santa Teresa." It seemed that when he did not see that statue for a week he suffered as acutely as if he were parted from some cherished mistress. And his adoration varied with the time of day, according to the light in which he beheld the figure: in the morning, when the pale glow of dawn steeped it in whiteness, he worshipped it with quite a mystical transport of the soul, whilst in the afternoon, when the glow of the declining sun's oblique rays seemed to permeate the marble, his passion became as fiery red as the blood of martyrs. "Ah! my friend," said he with a weary air whilst his dreamy eyes faded to mauve, "you have no idea how delightful and perturbing her awakening was this

morning — how languorously she opened her eyes, like a pure, candid virgin, emerging from the embrace of the Divinity. One could die of rapture at the sight!”

Then, growing calm again when he had taken a few steps, he resumed in the voice of a practical man who does not lose his balance in the affairs of life: “We’ll walk slowly towards the castle-fields district — the buildings yonder; and on our way I’ll tell you what I know of the things we shall see there. It was the maddest affair imaginable, one of those delirious frenzies of speculation which have a splendour of their own, just like the superb, monstrous masterpiece of a man of genius whose mind is unhinged. I was told of it all by some relatives of mine, who took part in the gambling, and, in point of fact, made a good deal of money by it.”

Thereupon, with the clearness and precision of a financier, employing technical terms with perfect ease, he recounted the extraordinary adventure. That all Italy, on the morrow of the occupation of Rome, should have been delirious with enthusiasm at the thought of at last possessing the ancient and glorious city, the eternal capital to which the empire of the world had been promised, was but natural. It was, so to say, a legitimate explosion of the delight and the hopes of a young nation anxious to show its power. The question was to make Rome a modern capital worthy of a great kingdom, and before aught else there were sanitary requirements to be dealt with: the city needed to be cleansed of all the filth which disgraced it. One cannot nowadays imagine in what

abominable putrescence the city of the popes, the *Roma sporca* which artists regret, was then steeped: the vast majority of the houses lacked even the most primitive arrangements, the public thoroughfares were used for all purposes, noble ruins served as store-places for sewage, the princely palaces were surrounded by filth, and the streets were perfect manure beds which fostered frequent epidemics. Thus vast municipal works were absolutely necessary, the question was one of health and life itself. And in much the same way it was only right to think of building houses for the newcomers, who would assuredly flock into the city. There had been a precedent at Berlin, whose population, after the establishment of the German empire, had suddenly increased by some hundreds of thousands. In the same way the population of Rome would certainly be doubled, tripled, quadrupled, for as the new centre of national life the city would necessarily attract all the *vis viva* of the provinces. And at this thought pride stepped in: the fallen government of the Vatican must be shown what Italy was capable of achieving, what splendour she would bestow on the new and third Rome, which, by the magnificence of its thoroughfares and the multitude of its people, would far excel either the imperial or the papal city.

True, during the early years some prudence was observed; wisely enough, houses were only built in proportion as they were required. The population had doubled at one bound, rising from two to four hundred thousand souls, thanks to the arrival of the little world of employees and officials of the public

services — all those who live on the State or hope to live on it, without mentioning the idlers and enjoyers of life whom a Court always carries in its train. However, this influx of newcomers was a first cause of intoxication, for every one imagined that the increase would continue, and, in fact, become more and more rapid. And so the city of the day before no longer seemed large enough; it was necessary to make immediate preparations for the morrow's need by enlarging Rome on all sides. Folks talked, too, of the Paris of the second empire, which had been so extended and transformed into a city of light and health. But unfortunately on the banks of the Tiber there was neither any preconcerted general plan nor any clear-seeing man, master of the situation, supported by powerful financial organisations. And the work, begun by pride, prompted by the ambition of surpassing the Rome of the Cæsars and the Popes, the determination to make the eternal, predestined city the queen and centre of the world once more, was completed by speculation, one of those extraordinary gambling frenzies, those tempests which arise, rage, destroy, and carry everything away without premonitory warning or possibility of arresting their course. All at once it was rumoured that land bought at five francs the metre had been sold again for a hundred francs the metre; and thereupon the fever arose — the fever of a nation which is passionately fond of gambling. A flight of speculators descending from North Italy swooped down upon Rome, the noblest and easiest of preys. Those needy, famished mountaineers found spoils for every appetite in that voluptuous South where life is so be-

nign, and the very delights of the climate helped to corrupt and hasten moral gangrene. At first, too, it was merely necessary to stoop; money was to be found by the shovelful among the rubbish of the first districts which were opened up. People who were clever enough to scent the course which the new thoroughfares would take and purchase buildings threatened with demolition increased their capital tenfold in a couple of years. And after that the contagion spread, infecting all classes — the princes, burgesses, petty proprietors, even the shop-keepers, bakers, grocers, and boot-makers; the delirium rising to such a pitch that a mere baker subsequently failed for forty-five millions.¹ Nothing, indeed, was left but rageful gambling, in which the stakes were millions, whilst the lands and the houses became mere fictions, mere pretexts for stock-exchange operations. And thus the old hereditary pride, which had dreamt of transforming Rome into the capital of the world, was heated to madness by the high fever of speculation — folks buying, and building, and selling without limit, without a pause, even as one might throw shares upon the market as fast and as long as presses can be found to print them.

No other city in course of evolution has ever furnished such a spectacle. Nowadays, when one strives to penetrate things one is confounded. The population had increased to five hundred thousand, and then seemingly remained stationary; nevertheless, new districts continued to sprout up more thickly than ever. Yet what folly it was not to wait for a further influx of

¹ 1,800,000*l.* See *ante*, p. 340, note. — *Trans.*

inhabitants! Why continue piling up accommodation for thousands of families whose advent was uncertain? The only excuse lay in having beforehand propounded the proposition that the third Rome, the triumphant capital of Italy, could not count less than a million souls, and in regarding that proposition as indisputable fact. The people had not come, but they surely would come: no patriot could doubt it without being guilty of treason. And so houses were built and built without a pause, for the half-million citizens who were coming. There was no anxiety as to the date of their arrival; it was sufficient that they should be expected. Inside Rome the companies which had been formed in connection with the new thoroughfares passing through the old, demolished, pestiferous districts, certainly sold or let their house property, and thereby realised large profits. But, as the craze increased, other companies were established for the purpose of erecting yet more and more districts outside Rome—veritable little towns, of which there was no need whatever. Beyond the Porta San Giovanni and the Porta San Lorenzo, suburbs sprang up as by miracle. A town was sketched out over the vast estate of the Villa Ludovisi, from the Porta Pia to the Porta Salaria and even as far as Sant' Agnese. And then came an attempt to make quite a little city, with church, school, and market, arise all at once on the fields of the Castle of Sant' Angelo. And it was no question of small dwellings for labourers, modest flats for employees, and others of limited means; no, it was a question of colossal mansions three and four storeys high, displaying uniform and endless facades

which made these new excentral quarters quite Babylonian, such districts, indeed, as only capitals endowed with intense life, like Paris and London, could contrive to populate. However, such were the monstrous products of pride and gambling; and what a page of history, what a bitter lesson now that Rome, financially ruined, is further disgraced by that hideous girdle of empty, and, for the most part, uncompleted carcasses, whose ruins already strew the grassy streets!

The fatal collapse, the disaster proved a frightful one. Narcisse explained its causes and recounted its phases so clearly that Pierre fully understood. Naturally enough, numerous financial companies had sprouted up: the Immobilière, the Società d'Edilizia e Construzione, the Fondaria, the Tiberiana, and the Esquilino. Nearly all of them built, erected huge houses, entire streets of them, for purposes of sale; but they also gambled in land, selling plots at large profit to petty speculators, who also dreamt of making large profits amidst the continuous, fictitious rise brought about by the growing fever of agiotage. And the worst was that the petty speculators, the middle-class people, the inexperienced shop-keepers without capital, were crazy enough to build in their turn by borrowing of the banks or applying to the companies which had sold them the land for sufficient cash to enable them to complete their structures. As a general rule, to avoid the loss of everything, the companies were one day compelled to take back both land and buildings, incomplete though the latter might be, and from the congestion which resulted they were bound to perish. If the expected million of people had arrived to

occupy the dwellings prepared for them the gains would have been fabulous, and in ten years Rome might have become one of the most flourishing capitals of the world. But the people did not come, and the dwellings remained empty. Moreover, the buildings erected by the companies were too large and costly for the average investor inclined to put his money into house property. Heredity had acted, the builders had planned things on too huge a scale, raising a series of magnificent piles whose purpose was to dwarf those of all other ages; but, as it happened, they were fated to remain lifeless and deserted, testifying with wondrous eloquence to the impotence of pride.

So there was no private capital that dared or could take the place of that of the companies. Elsewhere, in Paris for instance, new districts have been erected and embellishments have been carried out with the capital of the country — the money saved by dint of thrift. But in Rome all was built on the credit system, either by means of bills of exchange at ninety days, or — and this was chiefly the case — by borrowing money abroad. The huge sum sunk in these enterprises is estimated at a milliard, four-fifths of which was French money. The bankers did everything; the French ones lent to the Italian bankers at $3\frac{1}{2}$ or 4 per cent.; and the Italian bankers accommodated the speculators, the Roman builders, at 6, 7, and even 8 per cent. And thus the disaster was great indeed when France, learning of Italy's alliance with Germany, withdrew her 800,000,000 francs in less than two years. The Italian banks were drained of their

specie, and the land and building companies, being likewise compelled to reimburse their loans, were compelled to apply to the banks of issue, those privileged to issue notes. At the same time they intimidated the Government, threatening to stop all work and throw 40,000 artisans and labourers starving on the pavement of Rome if it did not compel the banks of issue to lend them the five or six millions of paper which they needed. And this the Government at last did, appalled by the possibility of universal bankruptcy. Naturally, however, the five or six millions could not be paid back at maturity, as the newly built houses found neither purchasers nor tenants; and so the great fall began, and continued with a rush, heaping ruin upon ruin. The petty speculators fell on the builders, the builders on the land companies, the land companies on the banks of issue, and the latter on the public credit, ruining the nation. And that was how a mere municipal crisis became a frightful disaster: a whole milliard sunk to no purpose, Rome disfigured, littered with the ruins of the gaping and empty dwellings which had been prepared for the five or six hundred thousand inhabitants for whom the city yet waits in vain!

Moreover, in the breeze of glory which swept by, the state itself took a colossal view of things. It was a question of at once making Italy triumphant and perfect, of accomplishing in five and twenty years what other nations have required centuries to effect. So there was feverish activity and a prodigious outlay on canals, ports, roads, railway lines, and improvements in all the great cities. Directly after the alli-

ance with Germany, moreover, the military and naval estimates began to devour millions to no purpose. And the ever growing financial requirements were simply met by the issue of paper, by a fresh loan each succeeding year. In Rome alone, too, the building of the Ministry of War cost ten millions, that of the Ministry of Finances fifteen, whilst a hundred was spent on the yet unfinished quays, and two hundred and fifty were sunk on works of defence around the city. And all this was a flare of the old hereditary pride, springing from that soil whose sap can only blossom in extravagant projects; the determination to dazzle and conquer the world which comes as soon as one has climbed to the Capitol, even though one's feet rest amidst the accumulated dust of all the forms of human power which have there crumbled one above the other.

“And, my dear friend,” continued Narcisse, “if I could go into all the stories that are current, that are whispered here and there, you would be stupefied at the insanity which overcame the whole city amidst the terrible fever to which the gambling passion gave rise. Folks of small account, and fools and ignorant people were not the only ones to be ruined; nearly all the Roman nobles lost their ancient fortunes, their gold and their palaces and their galleries of masterpieces, which they owed to the munificence of the popes. The colossal wealth which it had taken centuries of nepotism to pile up in the hands of a few melted away like wax, in less than ten years, in the levelling fire of modern speculation.” Then, forgetting that he was speaking to a priest, he went on to

relate one of the whispered stories to which he had alluded: "There's our good friend Dario, Prince Boccanera, the last of the name, reduced to live on the crumbs which fall to him from his uncle the Cardinal, who has little beyond his stipend left him. Well, Dario would be a rich man had it not been for that extraordinary affair of the Villa Montefiori. You have heard of it, no doubt; how Prince Onofrio, Dario's father, speculated, sold the villa grounds for ten millions, then bought them back and built on them, and how, at last, not only the ten millions were lost, but also all that remained of the once colossal fortune of the Boccaneras. What you haven't been told, however, is the secret part which Count Prada — our Contessina's husband — played in the affair. He was the lover of Princess Boccanera, the beautiful Flavia Montefiori, who had brought the villa as dowry to the old Prince. She was a very fine woman, much younger than her husband, and it is positively said that it was through her that Prada mastered the Prince — for she held her old dotting husband at arm's length whenever he hesitated to give a signature or go farther into the affair of which he scented the danger. And in all this Prada gained the millions which he now spends, while as for the beautiful Flavia, you are aware, no doubt, that she saved a little fortune from the wreck and bought herself a second and much younger husband, whom she turned into a Marquis Montefiori. In the whole affair the only victim is our good friend Dario, who is absolutely ruined, and wishes to marry his cousin, who is as poor as himself. It's true that she's determined

to have him, and that it's impossible for him not to reciprocate her love. But for that he would have already married some American girl with a dowry of millions, like so many of the ruined princes, on the verge of starvation, have done; that is, unless the Cardinal and Donna Serafina had opposed such a match, which would not have been surprising, proud and stubborn as they are, anxious to preserve the purity of their old Roman blood. However, let us hope that Dario and the exquisite Benedetta will some day be happy together."

Narcisse paused; but, after taking a few steps in silence, he added in a lower tone: "I've a relative who picked up nearly three millions in that Villa Montefiori affair. Ah! I regret that I wasn't here in those heroic days of speculation. It must have been very amusing; and what strokes there were for a man of self-possession to make!"

However, all at once, as he raised his head, he saw before him the *Quartiere dei Prati* — the new district of the castle fields; and his face thereupon changed: he again became an artist, indignant with the modern abominations with which old Rome had been disfigured. His eyes paled, and a curl of his lips expressed the bitter disdain of a dreamer whose passion for the vanished centuries was sorely hurt: "Look, look at it all!" he exclaimed. "To think of it, in the city of Augustus, the city of Leo X, the city of eternal power and eternal beauty!"

Pierre himself was thunderstruck. The meadows of the Castle of Sant' Angelo, dotted with a few poplar trees, had here formerly stretched alongside the Tiber

as far as the first slopes of Monte Mario, thus supplying, to the satisfaction of artists, a foreground or greenery to the Borgo and the dome of St. Peter's. But now, amidst the white, leprous, overturned plain, there stood a town of huge, massive houses, cubes of stone-work, invariably the same, with broad streets intersecting one another at right angles. From end to end similar façades appeared, suggesting series of convents, barracks, or hospitals. Extraordinary and painful was the impression produced by this town so suddenly immobilised whilst in course of erection. It was as if on some accursed morning a wicked magician had with one touch of his wand stopped the works and emptied the noisy stone-yards, leaving the buildings in mournful abandonment. Here on one side the soil had been banked up; there deep pits dug for foundations had remained gaping, overrun with weeds. There were houses whose halls scarcely rose above the level of the soil; others which had been raised to a second or third floor; others, again, which had been carried as high as was intended, and even roofed in, suggesting skeletons or empty cages. Then there were houses finished excepting that their walls had not been plastered, others which had been left without window frames, shutters, or doors; others, again, which had their doors and shutters, but were nailed up like coffins with not a soul inside them; and yet others which were partly, and in a few cases fully, inhabited — animated by the most unexpected of populations. And no words could describe the fearful mournfulness of that City of the Sleeping Beauty, hushed into mortal slumber before it had even lived,

lying annihilated beneath the heavy sun pending an awakening which, likely enough, would never come.

Following his companion, Pierre walked along the broad, deserted streets, where all was still as in a cemetery. Not a vehicle nor a pedestrian passed by. Some streets had no footways; weeds were covering the unpaved roads, turning them once more into fields; and yet there were temporary gas lamps, mere leaden pipes bound to poles, which had been there for years. To avoid payment of the door and window tax, the house owners had generally closed all apertures with planks; while some houses, of which little had been built, were surrounded by high palings for fear lest their cellars should become the dens of all the bandits of the district. But the most painful sight of all was that of the young ruins, the proud, lofty structures, which, although unfinished, were already cracking on all sides, and required the support of an intricate arrangement of timbers to prevent them from falling in dust upon the ground. A pang came to one's heart as though one was in a city which some scourge had depopulated—pestilence, war, or bombardment, of which these gaping carcasses seem to retain the mark. Then at the thought that this was abortment, not death—that destruction would complete its work before the dreamt-of, vainly awaited denizens would bring life to the still-born houses, one's melancholy deepened to hopeless discouragement. And at each corner, moreover, there was the frightful irony of the magnificent marble slabs which bore the names of the streets, illustrious historical names, Gracchus, Scipio, Pliny, Pompey, Julius Cæsar,

blazing forth on those unfinished, crumbling walls like a buffet dealt by the Past to modern incompetency.

Then Pierre was once more struck by this truth — that whosoever possesses Rome is consumed by the building frenzy, the passion for marble, the boastful desire to build and leave his monument of glory to future generations. After the Cæsars and the Popes had come the Italian Government, which was no sooner master of the city than it wished to reconstruct it, make it more splendid, more huge than it had ever been before. It was the fatal suggestion of the soil itself — the blood of Augustus rushing to the brain of these last-comers and urging them to a mad desire to make the third Rome the queen of the earth. Thence had come all the vast schemes such as the cyclopean quays and the mere ministries struggling to outvie the Colosseum; and thence had come all the new districts of gigantic houses which had sprouted like towns around the ancient city. It was not only on the castle fields, but at the Porta San Giovanni, the Porta San Lorenzo, the Villa Ludovisi, and on the heights of the Viminal and the Esquiline that unfinished, empty districts were already crumbling amidst the weeds of their deserted streets. After two thousand years of prodigious fertility the soil really seemed to be exhausted. Even as in very old fruit gardens newly planted plum and cherry trees wither and die, so the new walls, no doubt, found no life in that old dust of Rome, impoverished by the immemorial growth of so many temples, circuses, arches, basilicas, and churches. And thus the modern houses,

which men had sought to render fruitful, the useless, over-huge houses, swollen with hereditary ambition, had been unable to attain maturity, and remained there sterile like dry bushes on a plot of land exhausted by over-cultivation. And the frightful sadness that one felt arose from the fact that so creative and great a past had culminated in such present-day impotency — Rome, who had covered the world with indestructible monuments, now so reduced that she could only generate ruins.

“Oh, they’ll be finished some day!” said Pierre.

Narcisse gazed at him in astonishment: “For whom?”

That was the cruel question! Only by dint of patriotic enthusiasm on the morrow of the conquest had one been able to indulge in the hope of a mighty influx of population, and now singular blindness was needed for the belief that such an influx would ever take place. The past experiments seemed decisive; moreover, there was no reason why the population should double: Rome offered neither the attraction of pleasure nor that of gain to be amassed in commerce and industry for those she had not, nor of intensity of social and intellectual life, since of this she seemed no longer capable. In any case, years and years would be requisite. And, meantime, how could one people those houses which were finished; and for whom was one to finish those which had remained mere skeletons, falling to pieces under sun and rain? Must they all remain there indefinitely, some gaunt and open to every blast and others closed and silent like tombs, in the wretched hideousness of their

inutility and abandonment? What a terrible proof of error they offered under the radiant sky! The new masters of Rome had made a bad start, and even if they now knew what they ought to have done would they have the courage to undo what they had done? Since the milliard sunk there seemed to be definitely lost and wasted, one actually hoped for the advent of a Nero, endowed with mighty, sovereign will, who would take torch and pick and burn and raze everything in the avenging name of reason and beauty.

"Ah!" resumed Narcisse, "here are the Contessina and the Prince."

Benedetta had told the coachman to pull up in one of the open spaces intersecting the deserted streets, and now along the broad, quiet, grassy road — well fitted for a lovers' stroll — she was approaching on Dario's arm, both of them delighted with their outing, and no longer thinking of the sad things which they had come to see. "What a nice day it is!" the Contessina gaily exclaimed as she reached Pierre and Narcisse. "How pleasant the sunshine is! It's quite a treat to be able to walk about a little as if one were in the country!"

Dario was the first to cease smiling at the blue sky, all the delight of his stroll with his cousin on his arm suddenly departing. "My dear," said he, "we must go to see those people, since you are bent on it, though it will certainly spoil our day. But first I must take my bearings. I'm not particularly clever, you know, in finding my way in places where I don't care to go. Besides, this district is idiotic with all its dead streets and dead houses, and never a face or a shop to serve

as a reminder. Still I think the place is over yonder. Follow me; at all events, we shall see."

The four friends then wended their way towards the central part of the district, the part facing the Tiber, where a small nucleus of a population had collected. The landlords turned the few completed houses to the best advantage they could, letting the rooms at very low rentals, and waiting patiently enough for payment. Some needy employees, some poverty-stricken families had thus installed themselves there, and in the long run contrived to pay a trifle for their accommodation. In consequence, however, of the demolition of the ancient Ghetto and the opening of the new streets by which air had been let into the Trastevere district, perfect hordes of tatterdemalions, famished and homeless, and almost without garments, had swooped upon the unfinished houses, filling them with wretchedness and vermin; and it had been necessary to tolerate this lawless occupation lest all the frightful misery should remain displayed in the public thoroughfares. And so it was to those frightful tenants that had fallen the huge four and five storeyed palaces, entered by monumental doorways flanked by lofty statues and having carved balconies upheld by caryatides all along their fronts. Each family had made its choice, often closing the frameless windows with boards and the gaping doorways with rags, and occupying now an entire princely flat and now a few small rooms, according to its taste. Horrid-looking linen hung drying from the carved balconies, foul stains already degraded the white walls, and from the magnificent porches, intended

for sumptuous equipages, there poured a stream of filth which rotted in stagnant pools in the roads, where there was neither pavement nor footpath.

On two occasions already Dario had caused his companions to retrace their steps. He was losing his way and becoming more and more gloomy. "I ought to have taken to the left," said he, "but how is one to know amidst such a set as that!"

Parties of verminous children were now to be seen rolling in the dust; they were wondrously dirty, almost naked, with black skins and tangled locks as coarse as horsehair. There were also women in sordid skirts and with their loose jackets unhooked. Many stood talking together in yelping voices, whilst others, seated on old chairs with their hands on their knees, remained like that idle for hours. Not many men were met; but a few lay on the scorched grass, sleeping heavily in the sunlight. However, the stench was becoming unbearable — a stench of misery as when the human animal eschews all cleanliness to wallow in filth. And matters were made worse by the smell from a small, improvised market — the emanations of the rotting fruit, cooked and sour vegetables, and stale fried fish which a few poor women had set out on the ground amidst a throng of famished, covetous children.

"Ah! well, my dear, I really don't know where it is," all at once exclaimed the Prince, addressing his cousin. "Be reasonable; we've surely seen enough; let's go back to the carriage."

He was really suffering, and, as Benedetta had said, he did not know how to suffer. It seemed to him

monstrous that one should sadden one's life by such an excursion as this. Life ought to be buoyant and benign under the clear sky, brightened by pleasant sights, by dance and song. And he, with his naïve egotism, had a positive horror of ugliness, poverty, and suffering, the sight of which caused him both mental and physical pain.

Benedetta shuddered even as he did, but in presence of Pierre she desired to be brave. Glancing at him, and seeing how deeply interested and compassionate he looked, she desired to persevere in her effort to sympathise with the humble and the wretched. "No, no, Dario, we must stay. These gentlemen wish to see everything — is it not so?"

"Oh, the Rome of to-day is here," exclaimed Pierre; "this tells one more about it than all the promenades among the ruins and the monuments."

"You exaggerate, my dear Abbé," declared Narcisse. "Still, I will admit that it is very interesting. Some of the old women are particularly expressive."

At this moment Benedetta, seeing a superbly beautiful girl in front of her, could not restrain a cry of enraptured admiration: "*O che bellezza!*"

And then Dario, having recognised the girl, exclaimed with the same delight: "Why, it's La Pierina; she'll show us the way."

The girl had been following the party for a moment already without daring to approach. Her eyes, glittering with the joy of a loving slave, had at first darted towards the Prince, and then had hastily scrutinised the Contessina — not, however, with any show of jealous anger, but with an expression of affectionate

submission and resigned happiness at seeing that she also was very beautiful. And the girl fully answered to the Prince's description of her — tall, sturdy, with the bust of a goddess, a real antique, a Juno of twenty, her chin somewhat prominent, her mouth and nose perfect in contour, her eyes large and full like a heifer's, and her whole face quite dazzling — gilded, so to say, by a sunflash — beneath her casque of heavy jet-black hair.

"So you will show us the way?" said Benedetta, familiar and smiling, already consoled for all the surrounding ugliness by the thought that there should be such beautiful creatures in the world.

"Oh yes, signora, yes, at once!" And thereupon Pierina ran off before them, her feet in shoes which at any rate had no holes, whilst the old brown woollen dress which she wore appeared to have been recently washed and mended. One seemed to divine in her a certain coquettish care, a desire for cleanliness, which none of the others displayed; unless, indeed, it were simply that her great beauty lent radiance to her humble garments and made her appear a goddess.

"*Che bellezza! che bellezza!*" the Contessina repeated without wearying. "That girl, Dario *mio*, is a real feast for the eyes!"

"I knew she would please you," he quietly replied, flattered at having discovered such a beauty, and no longer talking of departure, since he could at last rest his eyes on something pleasant.

Behind them came Pierre, likewise full of admiration, whilst Narcisse spoke to him of the scrupulosity of his own tastes, which were for the rare and the

subtle. "She's beautiful, no doubt," said he; "but at bottom nothing can be more gross than the Roman style of beauty; there's no soul, none of the infinite in it. These girls simply have blood under their skins without ever a glimpse of heaven."

Meantime Pierina had stopped, and with a wave of the hand directed attention to her mother, who sat on a broken box beside the lofty doorway of an unfinished mansion. She also must have once been very beautiful, but at forty she was already a wreck, with dim eyes, drawn mouth, black teeth, broadly wrinkled countenance, and huge fallen bosom. And she was also fearfully dirty, her grey wavy hair dishevelled and her skirt and jacket soiled and slit, revealing glimpses of grimy flesh. On her knees she held a sleeping infant, her last-born, at whom she gazed like one overwhelmed and courageless, like a beast of burden resigned to her fate.

"*Bene, bene,*" said she, raising her head, "it's the gentleman who came to give me a crown because he saw you crying. And he's come back to see us with some friends. Well, well, there are some good hearts in the world after all."

Then she related their story, but in a spiritless way, without seeking to move her visitors. She was called Giacinta, it appeared, and had married a mason, one Tomaso Gozzo, by whom she had had seven children, Pierina, then Tito, a big fellow of eighteen, then four more girls, each at an interval of two years, and finally the infant, a boy, whom she now had on her lap. They had long lived in the Trastevere district, in an old house which had lately been pulled down;

and their existence seemed to have then been shattered, for since they had taken refuge in the Quartiere dei Prati the crisis in the building trade had reduced Tomaso and Tito to absolute idleness, and the bead factory where Pierina had earned as much as tenpence a day — just enough to prevent them from dying of hunger — had closed its doors. At present not one of them had any work; they lived purely by chance.

“If you like to go up,” the woman added, “you’ll find Tomaso there with his brother Ambrogio, whom we’ve taken to live with us. They’ll know better than I what to say to you. Tomaso is resting; but what else can he do? It’s like Tito — he’s dozing over there.”

So saying she pointed towards the dry grass amidst which lay a tall young fellow with a pronounced nose, hard mouth, and eyes as admirable as Pierina’s. He had raised his head to glance suspiciously at the visitors, a fierce frown gathering on his forehead when he remarked how rapturously his sister contemplated the Prince. Then he let his head fall again, but kept his eyes open, watching the pair stealthily.

“Take the lady and gentlemen upstairs, Pierina, since they would like to see the place,” said the mother.

Other women had now drawn near, shuffling along with bare feet in old shoes; bands of children, too, were swarming around; little girls but half clad, amongst whom, no doubt, were Giacinta’s four. However, with their black eyes under their tangled mops they were all so much alike that only their mothers could identify them. And the whole resem-

bled a teeming camp of misery pitched on that spot of majestic disaster, that street of palaces, unfinished yet already in ruins.

With a soft, loving smile, Benedetta turned to her cousin. "Don't you come up," she gently said; "I don't desire your death, Dario *mio*. It was very good of you to come so far. Wait for me here in the pleasant sunshine: Monsieur l'Abbé and Monsieur Habert will go up with me."

Dario began to laugh, and willingly acquiesced. Then lighting a cigarette, he walked slowly up and down, well pleased with the mildness of the atmosphere.

La Pierina had already darted into the spacious porch whose lofty, vaulted ceiling was adorned with coffers displaying a rosaceous pattern. However, a veritable manure heap covered such marble slabs as had already been laid in the vestibule, whilst the steps of the monumental stone staircase with sculptured balustrade were already cracked and so grimy that they seemed almost black. On all sides appeared the greasy stains of hands; the walls, whilst awaiting the painter and gilder, had been smeared with repulsive filth.

On reaching the spacious first-floor landing Pierina paused, and contented herself with calling through a gaping portal which lacked both door and framework: "Father, here's a lady and two gentlemen to see you." Then to the Contessina she added: "It's the third room at the end." And forthwith she herself rapidly descended the stairs, hastening back to her passion.

Benedetta and her companions passed through two

large rooms, bossy with plaster under foot and having frameless windows wide open upon space; and at last they reached a third room, where the whole Gozzo family had installed itself with the remnants it used as furniture. On the floor, where the bare iron girders showed, no boards having been laid down, were five or six leprous-looking palliasses. A long table, which was still strong, occupied the centre of the room, and here and there were a few old, damaged, straw-seated chairs mended with bits of rope. The great business had been to close two of the three windows with boards, whilst the third one and the door were screened with some old mattress ticking studded with stains and holes.

Tomaso's face expressed the surprise of a man who is unaccustomed to visits of charity. Seated at the table, with his elbows resting on it and his chin supported by his hands, he was taking repose, as his wife Giacinta had said. He was a sturdy fellow of five and forty, bearded and long-haired; and, in spite of all his misery and idleness, his large face had remained as serene as that of a Roman senator. However, the sight of the two foreigners—for such he at once judged Pierre and Narcisse to be, made him rise to his feet with sudden distrust. But he smiled on recognising Benedetta, and as she began to speak of Dario, and to explain the charitable purpose of their visit, he interrupted her: "Yes, yes, I know, Contessina. Oh! I well know who you are, for in my father's time I once walled up a window at the Palazzo Boccanera."

Then he complaisantly allowed himself to be

questioned, telling Pierre, who was surprised, that although they were certainly not happy they would have found life tolerable had they been able to work two days a week. And one could divine that he was, at heart, fairly well content to go on short commons, provided that he could live as he listed without fatigue. His narrative and his manner suggested the familiar locksmith who, on being summoned by a traveller to open his trunk, the key of which was lost, sent word that he could not possibly disturb himself during the hour of the siesta. In short, there was no rent to pay, as there were plenty of empty mansions open to the poor, and a few coppers would have sufficed for food, easily contented and sober as one was.

"But oh, sir," Tomaso continued, "things were ever so much better under the Pope. My father, a mason like myself, worked at the Vatican all his life, and even now, when I myself get a job or two, it's always there. We were spoilt, you see, by those ten years of busy work, when we never left our ladders and earned as much as we pleased. Of course, we fed ourselves better, and bought ourselves clothes, and took such pleasure as we cared for; so that it's all the harder nowadays to have to stint ourselves. But if you'd only come to see us in the Pope's time! No taxes, everything to be had for nothing, so to say — why, one merely had to let oneself live."

At this moment a growl arose from one of the palliasses lying in the shade of the boarded windows, and the mason, in his slow, quiet way, resumed: "It's my brother Ambrogio, who isn't of my opinion.

He was with the Republicans in '49, when he was fourteen. But it doesn't matter; we took him with us when we heard that he was dying of hunger and sickness in a cellar."

The visitors could not help quivering with pity. Ambrogio was the elder by some fifteen years; and now, though scarcely sixty, he was already a ruin, consumed by fever, his legs so wasted that he spent his days on his palliasse without ever going out. Shorter and slighter, but more turbulent than his brother, he had been a carpenter by trade. And, despite his physical decay, he retained an extraordinary head—the head of an apostle and martyr, at once noble and tragic in its expression, and encompassed by bristling snowy hair and beard.

"The Pope," he growled; "I've never spoken badly of the Pope. Yet it's his fault if tyranny continues. He alone in '49 could have given us the Republic, and then we shouldn't have been as we are now."

Ambrogio had known Mazzini, whose vague religiosity remained in him—the dream of a Republican pope at last establishing the reign of liberty and fraternity. But later on his passion for Garibaldi had disturbed these views, and led him to regard the papacy as worthless, incapable of achieving human freedom. And so, between the dream of his youth and the stern experience of his life, he now hardly knew in which direction the truth lay. Moreover, he had never acted save under the impulse of violent emotion, but contented himself with fine words—vague, indeterminate wishes.

"Brother Ambrogio," replied Tomaso, all tran-

quillity, "the Pope is the Pope, and wisdom lies in putting oneself on his side, because he will always be the Pope — that is to say, the stronger. For my part, if we had to vote to-morrow I'd vote for him."

Calmed by the shrewd prudence characteristic of his race, the old carpenter made no haste to reply. At last he said, "Well, as for me, brother Tomaso, I should vote against him — always against him. And you know very well that we should have the majority. The Pope king indeed! That's all over. The very Borgo would revolt. Still, I won't say that we oughtn't to come to an understanding with him, so that everybody's religion may be respected."

Pierre listened, deeply interested, and at last ventured to ask: "Are there many socialists among the Roman working classes?"

This time the answer came after a yet longer pause. "Socialists? Yes, there are some, no doubt, but much fewer than in other places. All those things are novelties which impatient fellows go in for without understanding much about them. We old men, we were for liberty; we don't believe in fire and massacre."

Then, fearing to say too much in presence of that lady and those gentlemen, Ambrogio began to moan on his pallet, whilst the Contessina, somewhat upset by the smell of the place, took her departure, after telling the young priest that it would be best for them to leave their alms with the wife downstairs. Meantime Tomaso resumed his seat at the table, again letting his chin rest on his hands as he nodded to his visitors, no more impressed by their departure

than he had been by their arrival: "To the pleasure of seeing you again, and am happy to have been able to oblige you."

On the threshold, however, Narcisse's enthusiasm burst forth; he turned to cast a final admiring glance at old Ambrogio's head, "a perfect masterpiece," which he continued praising whilst he descended the stairs.

Down below Giacinta was still sitting on the broken box with her infant across her lap, and a few steps away Pierina stood in front of Dario, watching him with an enchanted air whilst he finished his cigarette. Tito, lying low in the grass like an animal on the watch for prey, did not for a moment cease to gaze at them.

"Ah, signora!" resumed the woman, in her resigned, doleful voice, "the place is hardly inhabitable, as you must have seen. The only good thing is that one gets plenty of room. But there are draughts enough to kill me, and I'm always so afraid of the children falling down some of the holes."

Thereupon she related a story of a woman who had lost her life through mistaking a window for a door one evening and falling headlong into the street. Then, too, a little girl had broken both arms by tumbling from a staircase which had no banisters. And you could die there without anybody knowing how bad you were and coming to help you. Only the previous day the corpse of an old man had been found lying on the plaster in a lonely room. Starvation must have killed him quite a week previously, yet he would still have been stretched there if the odour of

his remains had not attracted the attention of neighbours.

"If one only had something to eat things wouldn't be so bad!" continued Giacinta. "But it's dreadful when there's a baby to suckle and one gets no food, for after a while one has no milk. This little fellow wants his titty and gets angry with me because I can't give him any. But it isn't my fault. He has sucked me till the blood came, and all I can do is to cry."

As she spoke tears welled into her poor dim eyes. But all at once she flew into a tantrum with Tito, who was still wallowing in the grass like an animal instead of rising by way of civility towards those fine people, who would surely leave her some alms. "Eh! Tito, you lazy fellow, can't you get up when people come to see you?" she called.

After some pretence of not hearing, the young fellow at last rose with an air of great ill-humour; and Pierre, feeling interested in him, tried to draw him out as he had done with the father and uncle upstairs. But Tito only returned curt answers, as if both bored and suspicious. Since there was no work to be had, said he, the only thing was to sleep. It was of no use to get angry; that wouldn't alter matters. So the best was to live as one could without increasing one's worry. As for socialists—well, yes, perhaps there were a few, but he didn't know any. And his weary, indifferent manner made it quite clear that, if his father was for the Pope and his uncle for the Republic, he himself was for nothing at all. In this Pierre divined the end of a nation, or rather the slumber of a nation in which democracy has not yet awak-

ened. However, as the priest continued, asking Tito his age, what school he had attended, and in what district he had been born, the young man suddenly cut the questions short by pointing with one finger to his breast and saying gravely, "*Io son' Romano di Roma.*"

And, indeed, did not that answer everything? "I am a Roman of Rome." Pierre smiled sadly and spoke no further. Never had he more fully realised the pride of that race, the long-descending inheritance of glory which was so heavy to bear. The sovereign vanity of the Cæsars lived anew in that degenerate young fellow who was scarcely able to read and write. Starveling though he was, he knew his city, and could instinctively have recounted the grand pages of its history. The names of the great emperors and great popes were familiar to him. And why should men toil and moil when they had been the masters of the world? Why not live nobly and idly in the most beautiful of cities, under the most beautiful of skies? "*Io son' Romano di Roma!*"

Benedetta had slipped her alms into the mother's hand, and Pierre and Narcisse were following her example when Dario, who had already done so, thought of Pierina. He did not like to offer her money, but a pretty, fanciful idea occurred to him. Lightly touching his lips with his finger-tips, he said, with a faint laugh, "For beauty!"

There was something really pretty and pleasing in the kiss thus wafted with a slightly mocking laugh by that familiar, good-natured young Prince who, as in some love story of the olden time, was touched by the beautiful bead-worker's mute adoration. Pierina

flushed with pleasure, and, losing her head, darted upon Dario's hand and pressed her warm lips to it with unthinking impulsiveness, in which there was as much divine gratitude as tender passion. But Tito's eyes flashed with anger at the sight, and, brutally seizing his sister by the skirt, he threw her back, growling between his teeth, "None of that, you know, or I'll kill you, and him too!"

It was high time for the visitors to depart, for other women, scenting the presence of money, were now coming forward with outstretched hands, or despatching tearful children in their stead. The whole wretched, abandoned district was in a flutter, a distressful wail ascended from those lifeless streets with high resounding names. But what was to be done? One could not give to all. So the only course lay in flight — amidst deep sadness as one realised how powerless was charity in presence of such appalling want.

When Benedetta and Dario had reached their carriage they hastened to take their seats and nestle side by side, glad to escape from all such horrors. Still the Contessina was well pleased with her bravery in the presence of Pierre, whose hand she pressed with the emotion of a pupil touched by the master's lesson, after Narcisse had told her that he meant to take the young priest to lunch at the little restaurant on the Piazza of St. Peter's whence one obtained such an interesting view of the Vatican.

"Try some of the light white wine of Genzano," said Dario, who had become quite gay again. "There's nothing better to drive away the blues."

However, Pierre's curiosity was insatiable, and on

the way he again questioned Narcisse about the people of modern Rome, their life, habits, and manners. There was little or no education, he learnt; no large manufactures and no export trade existed. The men carried on the few trades that were current, all consumption being virtually limited to the city itself. Among the women there were bead-workers and embroiderers; and the manufacture of religious articles, such as medals and chaplets, and of certain popular jewellery had always occupied a fair number of hands. But after marriage the women, invariably burdened with numerous offspring, attempted little beyond household work. Briefly, the population took life as it came, working just sufficiently to secure food, contenting itself with vegetables, pastes, and scraggy mutton, without thought of rebellion or ambition. The only vices were gambling and a partiality for the red and white wines of the Roman province — wines which excited to quarrel and murder, and on the evenings of feast days, when the taverns emptied, strewed the streets with groaning men, slashed and stabbed with knives. The girls, however, but seldom went wrong; one could count those who allowed themselves to be seduced; and this arose from the great union prevailing in each family, every member of which bowed submissively to the father's absolute authority. Moreover, the brothers watched over their sisters even as Tito did over Pierina, guarding them fiercely for the sake of the family honour. And amidst all this there was no real religion, but simply a childish idolatry, all hearts going forth to Madonna and the Saints, who alone were entreated and regarded as having

being: for it never occurred to anybody to think of God.

Thus the stagnation of the lower orders could easily be understood. Behind them were the many centuries during which idleness had been encouraged, vanity flattered, and nerveless life willingly accepted. When they were neither masons, nor carpenters, nor bakers, they were servants serving the priests, and more or less directly in the pay of the Vatican. Thence sprang the two antagonistic parties, on the one hand the more numerous party composed of the old Carbonari, Mazzinians, and Garibaldians, the *élite* of the Trastevere; and on the other the "clients" of the Vatican, all who lived on or by the Church and regretted the Pope-King. But, after all, the antagonism was confined to opinions; there was no thought of making an effort or incurring a risk. For that, some sudden flare of passion, strong enough to overcome the sturdy calmness of the race, would have been needed. But what would have been the use of it? The wretchedness had lasted for so many centuries, the sky was so blue, the siesta preferable to aught else during the hot hours! And only one thing seemed positive—that the majority was certainly in favour of Rome remaining the capital of Italy. Indeed, rebellion had almost broken out in the Leonine City when the cession of the latter to the Holy See was rumoured. As for the increase of want and poverty, this was largely due to the circumstance that the Roman workman had really gained nothing by the many works carried on in his city during fifteen years. First of all, over 40,000 provincials, mostly from the North, more

spirited and resistant than himself, and working at cheaper rates, had invaded Rome; and when he, the Roman, had secured his share of the labour, he had lived in better style, without thought of economy; so that after the crisis, when the 40,000 men from the provinces were sent home again, he had found himself once more in a dead city where trade was always slack. And thus he had relapsed into his antique indolence, at heart well pleased at no longer being hustled by press of work, and again accommodating himself as best he could to his old mistress, Want, empty in pocket yet always a *grand seigneur*.

However, Pierre was struck by the great difference between the want and wretchedness of Rome and Paris. In Rome the destitution was certainly more complete, the food more loathsome, the dirt more repulsive. Yet at the same time the Roman poor retained more ease of manner and more real gaiety. The young priest thought of the fireless, breadless poor of Paris, shivering in their hovels at winter time; and suddenly he understood. The destitution of Rome did not know cold. What a sweet and eternal consolation; a sun for ever bright, a sky for ever blue and benign out of charity to the wretched! And what mattered the vileness of the dwelling if one could sleep under the sky, fanned by the warm breeze! What mattered even hunger if the family could await the windfall of chance in sunlit streets or on the scorched grass! The climate induced sobriety; there was no need of alcohol or red meat to enable one to face treacherous fogs. Blissful idleness smiled on the golden evenings, poverty became like the enjoyment of liberty in that

delightful atmosphere where the happiness of living seemed to be all sufficient. Narcisse told Pierre that at Naples, in the narrow odoriferous streets of the port and Santa Lucia districts, the people spent virtually their whole lives out-of-doors, gay, childish, and ignorant, seeking nothing beyond the few pence that were needed to buy food. And it was certainly the climate which fostered the prolonged infancy of the nation, which explained why such a democracy did not awaken to social ambition and consciousness of itself. No doubt the poor of Naples and Rome suffered from want; but they did not know the rancour which cruel winter implants in men's hearts, the dark rancour which one feels on shivering with cold while rich people are warming themselves before blazing fires. They did not know the infuriated reveries in snow-swept hovels, when the guttering dip burns low, the passionate need which then comes upon one to wreak justice, to revolt, as from a sense of duty, in order that one may save wife and children from consumption, in order that they also may have a warm nest where life shall be a possibility! Ah! the want that shivers with the bitter cold — therein lies the excess of social injustice, the most terrible of schools, where the poor learn to realise their sufferings, where they are roused to indignation, and swear to make those sufferings cease, even if in doing so they annihilate all olden society!

And in that same clemency of the southern heavens Pierre also found an explanation of the life of St. Francis,¹ that divine mendicant of love who roamed

¹ St. Francis of Assisi, the founder of the famous order of mendicant friars. — *Trans.*

the high roads extolling the charms of poverty. Doubtless he was an unconscious revolutionary, protesting against the overflowing luxury of the Roman court by his return to the love of the humble, the simplicity of the primitive Church. But such a revival of innocence and sobriety would never have been possible in a northern land. The enchantment of Nature, the frugality of a people whom the sunlight nourished, the benignity of mendicancy on roads for ever warm, were needed to effect it. And yet how was it possible that a St. Francis, glowing with brotherly love, could have appeared in a land which nowadays so seldom practises charity, which treats the lowly so harshly and contemptuously, and cannot even bestow alms on its own Pope? Is it because ancient pride ends by hardening all hearts, or because the experience of very old races leads finally to egotism, that one now beholds Italy seemingly benumbed amidst dogmatic and pompous Catholicism, whilst the return to the ideals of the Gospel, the passionate interest in the poor and the suffering comes from the woful plains of the North, from the nations whose sunlight is so limited? Yes, doubtless all that has much to do with the change, and the success of St. Francis was in particular due to the circumstance that, after so gaily espousing his lady, Poverty, he was able to lead her, bare-footed and scarcely clad, during endless and delightful spring-tides, among communities whom an ardent need of love and compassion then consumed.

While conversing, Pierre and Narcisse had reached the Piazza of St. Peter's, and they sat down at one of the little tables skirting the pavement outside the res-

taurant where they had lunched once before. The linen was none too clean, but the view was splendid. The Basilica rose up in front of them, and the Vatican on the right, above the majestic curve of the colonnade. Just as the waiter was bringing the *hors-d'œuvre*, some *finocchio*¹ and anchovies, the young priest, who had fixed his eyes on the Vatican, raised an exclamation to attract Narcisse's attention: "Look, my friend, at that window, which I am told is the Holy Father's. Can't you distinguish a pale figure standing there, quite motionless?"

The young man began to laugh. "Oh! well," said he, "it must be the Holy Father in person. You are so anxious to see him that your very anxiety conjures him into your presence."

"But I assure you," repeated Pierre, "that he is over there behind the window-pane. There is a white figure looking this way."

Narcisse, who was very hungry, began to eat whilst still indulging in banter. All at once, however, he exclaimed: "Well, my dear Abbé, as the Pope is looking at us, this is the moment to speak of him. I promised to tell you how he sunk several millions of St. Peter's Patrimony in the frightful financial crisis of which you have just seen the ruins; and, indeed, your visit to the new district of the castle fields would not be complete without this story by way of appendix."

Thereupon, without losing a mouthful, Narcisse spoke at considerable length. At the death of Pius IX the Patrimony of St. Peter, it seemed, had ex-

¹ Fennel-root, eaten raw, a favourite "appetiser" in Rome during the spring and autumn. — *Trans.*

ceeded twenty millions of francs. Cardinal Antonelli, who speculated, and whose ventures were usually successful, had for a long time left a part of this money with the Rothschilds and a part in the hands of different nuncios, who turned it to profit abroad. After Antonelli's death, however, his successor, Cardinal Simeoni, withdrew the money from the nuncios to invest it at Rome; and Leo XIII on his accession entrusted the administration of the Patrimony to a commission of cardinals, of which Monsignor Folchi was appointed secretary. This prelate, who for twelve years played such an important rôle, was the son of an employee of the Dataria, who, thanks to skilful financial operations, had left a fortune of a million francs. Monsignor Folchi inherited his father's cleverness, and revealed himself to be a financier of the first rank in such wise that the commission gradually relinquished its powers to him, letting him act exactly as he pleased and contenting itself with approving the reports which he laid before it at each meeting. The Patrimony, however, yielded scarcely more than a million francs per annum, and, as the expenditure amounted to seven millions, six had to be found. Accordingly, from that other source of income, the Peter's Pence, the Pope annually gave three million francs to Monsignor Folchi, who, by skilful speculations and investments, was able to double them every year, and thus provide for all disbursements without ever breaking into the capital of the Patrimony. In the earlier times he realised considerable profit by gambling in land in and about Rome. He took shares also in many new enterprises, speculated in

mills, omnibuses, and water-services, without mentioning all the gambling in which he participated with the Banca di Roma, a Catholic institution. Wonderstruck by his skill, the Pope, who, on his own side, had hitherto speculated through the medium of a confidential employee named Sterbini, dismissed the latter, and entrusted Monsignor Folchi with the duty of turning his money to profit in the same way as he turned that of the Holy See. This was the climax of the prelate's favour, the apogee of his power. Bad days were dawning, things were tottering already, and the great collapse was soon to come, sudden and swift like lightning. One of Leo XIII's practices was to lend large sums to the Roman princes who, seized with the gambling frenzy, and mixed up in land and building speculations, were at a loss for money. To guarantee the Pope's advances they deposited shares with him, and thus, when the downfall came, he was left with heaps of worthless paper on his hands. Then another disastrous affair was an attempt to found a house of credit in Paris in view of working off the shares which could not be disposed of in Italy among the French aristocracy and religious people. To egg these on it was said that the Pope was interested in the venture; and the worst was that he dropped three millions of francs in it.¹ The situation then became the more critical as he had gradu-

¹ The allusion is evidently to the famous Union Générale, on which the Pope bestowed his apostolic benediction, and with which M. Zola deals at length in his novel *Money*. Certainly a very brilliant idea was embodied in the Union Générale, that of establishing a great international Catholic bank which would destroy the Jewish financial autoeracy throughout Europe, and

ally risked all the money he disposed of in the terrible agiotage going on in Rome, tempted thereto by the prospect of huge profits and perhaps indulging in the hope that he might win back by money the city which had been torn from him by force. His own responsibility remained complete, for Monsignor Folchi never made an important venture without consulting him; and he must have been therefore the real artisan of the disaster, mastered by his passion for gain, his desire to endow the Church with a huge capital, that great source of power in modern times. As always happens, however, the prelate was the only victim. He had become imperious and difficult to deal with; and was no longer liked by the cardinals of the commission, who were merely called together to approve such transactions as he chose to entrust to them. So, when the crisis came, a plot was laid; the cardinals terrified the Pope by telling him of all the evil rumours which were current, and then forced Monsignor Folchi to render a full account of his speculations. The situation proved to be very bad; it was no longer possible to avoid heavy losses. And so Monsignor Folchi was disgraced, and since then has vainly solicited an audience of Leo XIII, who has always refused to receive him, as if determined to punish him for their common fault—that passion for lucre which blinded them both. Very pious and submissive, however,

provide both the papacy and the Legitimist cause in several countries with the sinews of war. But in the battle which ensued the great Jew financial houses proved the stronger, and the disaster which overtook the Catholic speculators was a terrible one.

— *Trans.*

Monsignor Folchi has never complained, but has kept his secrets and bowed to fate. Nobody can say exactly how many millions the Patrimony of St. Peter lost when Rome was changed into a gambling-hell, but if some prelates only admit ten, others go as far as thirty. The probability is that the loss was about fifteen millions.¹

Whilst Narcisse was giving this account he and Pierre had despatched their cutlets and tomatoes, and the waiter was now serving them some fried chicken. "At the present time," said Narcisse by way of conclusion, "the gap has been filled up; I told you of the large sums yielded by the Peter's Pence Fund, the amount of which is only known by the Pope, who alone fixes its employment. And, by the way, he isn't cured of speculating: I know from a good source that he still gambles, though with more prudence. Moreover, his confidential assistant is still a prelate. And, when all is said, my dear Abbé, he's in the right: a man must belong to his times — dash it all!"

Pierre had listened with growing surprise, in which terror and sadness mingled. Doubtless such things were natural, even legitimate; yet he, in his dream of a pastor of souls free from all terrestrial cares, had never imagined that they existed. What! the Pope — the spiritual father of the lowly and the suffering — had speculated in land and in stocks and shares! He had gambled, placed funds in the hands of Jew bankers, practised usury, extracted hard interest from money — he, the successor of the Apostle, the Pontiff of Christ, the representative of Jesus, of the Gospel,

¹ That is 600,000 *l.*

that divine friend of the poor! And, besides, what a painful contrast: so many millions stored away in those rooms of the Vatican, and so many millions working and fructifying, constantly being diverted from one speculation to another in order that they might yield the more gain; and then down below, near at hand, so much want and misery in those abominable unfinished buildings of the new districts, so many poor folks dying of hunger amidst filth, mothers without milk for their babes, men reduced to idleness by lack of work, old ones at the last gasp like beasts of burden who are pole-axed when they are of no more use! Ah! God of Charity, God of Love, was it possible! The Church doubtless had material wants; she could not live without money; prudence and policy had dictated the thought of gaining for her such a treasure as would enable her to fight her adversaries victoriously. But how grievously this wounded one's feelings, how it soiled the Church, how she descended from her divine throne to become nothing but a party, a vast international association organised for the purpose of conquering and possessing the world!

And the more Pierre thought of the extraordinary adventure the greater was his astonishment. Could a more unexpected, startling drama be imagined? That Pope shutting himself up in his palace — a prison, no doubt, but one whose hundred windows overlooked immensity; that Pope who, at all hours of the day and night, in every season, could from his window see his capital, the city which had been stolen from him, and the restitution of which he never ceased to demand; that Pope who, day by day, beheld the

changes effected in the city — the opening of new streets, the demolition of ancient districts, the sale of land, and the gradual erection of new buildings which ended by forming a white girdle around the old ruddy roofs; that Pope who, in presence of this daily spectacle, this building frenzy, which he could follow from morn till eve, was himself finally overcome by the gambling passion, and, secluded in his closed chamber, began to speculate on the embellishments of his old capital, seeking wealth in the spurt of work and trade brought about by that very Italian Government which he reproached with spoliation; and finally that Pope losing millions in a catastrophe which he ought to have desired, but had been unable to foresee! No, never had dethroned monarch yielded to a stranger idea, compromised himself in a more tragical venture, the result of which fell upon him like divine punishment. And it was no mere king who had done this, but the delegate of God, the man who, in the eyes of idolatrous Christendom, was the living manifestation of the Deity!

Dessert had now been served — a goat's cheese and some fruit — and Narcisse was just finishing some grapes when, on raising his eyes, he in turn exclaimed: "Well, you are quite right, my dear Abbé, I myself can see a pale figure at the window of the Holy Father's room."

Pierre, who scarcely took his eyes from the window, answered slowly: "Yes, yes, it went away, but has just come back, and stands there white and motionless."

"Well, after all, what would you have the Pope do?" resumed Narcisse with his languid air. "He's

like everybody else; he looks out of the window when he wants a little distraction, and certainly there's plenty for him to look at."

The same idea had occurred to Pierre, and was filling him with emotion. People talked of the Vatican being closed, and pictured a dark, gloomy palace, encompassed by high walls, whereas this palace overlooked all Rome, and the Pope from his window could see the world. Pierre himself had viewed the panorama from the summit of the Janiculum, the *loggie* of Raffaele, and the dome of St. Peter's, and so he well knew what it was that Leo XIII was able to behold. In the centre of the vast desert of the Campagna, bounded by the Sabine and Alban mountains, the seven illustrious hills appeared to him with their trees and edifices. His eyes ranged also over all the basilicas, Santa Maria Maggiore, San Giovanni in Laterano, the cradle of the papacy, San Paolo-fuori-le-Mura, Santa Croce in Gerusalemme, Sant' Agnese, and the others; they beheld, too, the domes of the Gesù of Sant' Andrea della Valle, San Carlo and San Giovanni dei Fiorentini, and indeed all those four hundred churches of Rome which make the city like a *campo santo* studded with crosses. And Leo XIII could moreover see the famous monuments testifying to the pride of successive centuries—the Castle of Sant' Angelo, that imperial mausoleum which was transformed into a papal fortress, the distant white line of the tombs of the Appian Way, the scattered ruins of the baths of Caracalla and the abode of Septimius Severus; and then, after the innumerable columns, porticoes, and triumphal arches,

there were the palaces and villas of the sumptuous cardinals of the Renaissance, the Palazzo Farnese, the Palazzo Borghese, the Villa Medici, and others, amidst a swarming of façades and roofs. But, in particular, just under his window, on the left, the Pope was able to see the abominations of the unfinished district of the castle fields. In the afternoon, when he strolled through his gardens, bastioned by the wall of the fourth Leo like the plateau of a citadel, his view stretched over the ravaged valley at the foot of Monte Mario, where so many brickworks were established during the building frenzy. The green slopes are still ripped up, yellow trenches intersect them in all directions, and the closed works and factories have become wretched ruins with lofty, black, and smokeless chimneys. And at any other hour of the day Leo XIII could not approach his window without beholding the abandoned houses for which all those brickfields had worked, those houses which had died before they even lived, and where there was now nought but the swarming misery of Rome, rotting there like some decomposition of olden society.

However, Pierre more particularly thought of Leo XIII, forgetting the rest of the city to let his thoughts dwell on the Palatine, now bereft of its crown of palaces and rearing only its black cypresses towards the blue heavens. Doubtless in his mind he rebuilt the palaces of the Cæsars, whilst before him rose great shadowy forms arrayed in purple, visions of his real ancestors, those emperors and Supreme Pontiffs who alone could tell him how one might reign over every nation and be the absolute master of the world.

Then, however, his glances strayed to the Quirinal, and there he could contemplate the new and neighbouring royalty. How strange the meeting of those two palaces, the Quirinal and the Vatican, which rise up and gaze at one another across the Rome of the middle ages and the Renascence, whose roofs, baked and gilded by the burning sun, are jumbled in confusion alongside the Tiber. When the Pope and the King go to their windows they can with a mere opera-glass see each other quite distinctly. True, they are but specks in the boundless immensity, and what a gulf there is between them — how many centuries of history, how many generations that battled and suffered, how much departed greatness, and how much new seed for the mysterious future! Still, they can see one another, and they are yet waging the eternal fight, the fight as to which of them — the pontiff and shepherd of the soul or the monarch and master of the body — shall possess the people whose stream rolls beneath them, and in the result remain the absolute sovereign. And Pierre wondered also what might be the thoughts and dreams of Leo XIII behind those window-panes where he still fancied he could distinguish his pale, ghostly figure. On surveying new Rome, the ravaged olden districts and the new ones laid waste by the blast of disaster, the Pope must certainly rejoice at the colossal failure of the Italian Government. His city had been stolen from him; the newcomers had virtually declared that they would show him how a great capital was created, and their boast had ended in that catastrophe — a multitude of hideous and useless buildings which they did not even

know how to finish! He, the Pope, could moreover only be delighted with the terrible worries into which the usurping *régime* had fallen, the political crisis, and the financial crisis, the whole growing national unrest amidst which that *régime* seemed likely to sink some day; and yet did not he himself possess a patriotic soul? was he not a loving son of that Italy whose genius and ancient ambition coursed in the blood of his veins? Ah! no, nothing against Italy; rather everything that would enable her to become once more the mistress of the world. And so, even amidst the joy of hope, he must have been grieved to see her thus ruined, threatened with bankruptcy, displaying like a sore that overturned, unfinished Rome which was a confession of her impotency. But, on the other hand, if the House of Savoy were to be swept away, would he not be there to take its place, and at last resume possession of his capital, which, from his window, for fifteen years past, he had beheld in the grip of masons and demolishers? And then he would again be the master and reign over the world, enthroned in the predestined city to which prophecy has ensured eternity and universal dominion.

But the horizon spread out, and Pierre wondered what Leo XIII beheld beyond Rome, beyond the Campagna and the Sabine and Alban mountains. What had he seen for eighteen years past from that window whence he obtained his only view of the world? What echoes of modern society, its truths and certainties, had reached his ears? From the heights of the Viminal, where the railway terminus stands, the prolonged whistling of engines must have

occasionally been carried towards him, suggesting our scientific civilisation, the nations brought nearer together, free humanity marching on towards the future. Did he himself ever dream of liberty when, on turning to the right, he pictured the sea over yonder, past the tombs of the Appian Way? Had he ever desired to go off, quit Rome and her traditions, and found the Papacy of the new democracies elsewhere? As he was said to possess so clear and penetrating a mind he ought to have understood and trembled at the far-away stir and noise that came from certain lands of battle, from those United States of America, for instance, where revolutionary bishops were conquering, winning over the people. Were they working for him or for themselves? If he could not follow them, if he remained stubborn within his Vatican, bound on every side by dogma and tradition, might not rupture some day become unavoidable? And, indeed, the fear of a blast of schism, coming from afar, must have filled him with growing anguish. It was assuredly on that account that he had practised the diplomacy of conciliation, seeking to unite in his hands all the scattered forces of the Church, overlooking the audacious proceedings of certain bishops as far as possible, and himself striving to gain the support of the people by putting himself on its side against the fallen monarchies. But would he ever go any farther? Shut up in that Vatican, behind that bronze portal, was he not bound to the strict formulas of Catholicism, chained to them by the force of centuries? There obstinacy was fated; it was impossible for him to resign himself to that which was his real and surpassing power, the purely spiritual

power, the moral authority which brought mankind to his feet, made thousands of pilgrims kneel and women swoon. Departure from Rome and the renunciation of the temporal power would not displace the centre of the Catholic world, but would transform him, the head of the Catholic Church, into the head of something else. And how anxious must have been his thoughts if the evening breeze ever brought him a vague presentiment of that something else, a fear of the new religion which was yet dimly, confusedly dawning amidst the tramp of the nations on the march, and the sound of which must have reached him at one and the same time from every point of the compass.

At this precise moment, however, Pierre felt that the white and motionless shadow behind those window-panes was held erect by pride, by the ever present conviction of victory. If man could not achieve it, a miracle would intervene. He, the Pope, was absolutely convinced that he or some successor would recover possession of Rome. Had not the Church all eternity before it? And, moreover, why should not the victor be himself? Could not God accomplish the impossible? Why, if it so pleased God, on the very morrow his city would be restored to him, in spite of all the objections of human reason, all the apparent logic of facts. Ah! how he would welcome the return of that prodigal daughter whose equivocal adventures he had ever watched with tears bedewing his paternal eyes! He would soon forget the excesses which he had beheld during eighteen years at all hours and in all seasons. Perhaps he dreamt of what he would do with those new districts with which the city had been soiled.

Should they be razed, or left as evidence of the insanity of the usurpers? At all events, Rome would again become the august and lifeless city, disdainful of such vain matters as material cleanliness and comfort, and shining forth upon the world like a pure soul encompassed by the traditional glory of the centuries. And his dream continued, picturing the course which events would take on the very morrow, no doubt. Anything, even a republic was preferable to that House of Savoy. Why not a federal republic, reviving the old political divisions of Italy, restoring Rome to the Church, and choosing him, the Pope, as the natural protector of the country thus reorganised? But his eyes travelled beyond Rome and Italy, and his dream expanded, embracing republican France, Spain which might become republican again, Austria which would some day be won, and indeed all the Catholic nations welded into the United States of Europe, and fraternising in peace under his high presidency as Sovereign Pontiff. And then would follow the supreme triumph, all the other churches at last vanishing, and all the dissident communities coming to him as to the one and only pastor, who would reign in the name of Jesus over the universal democracy.

However, whilst Pierre was immersed in this dream which he attributed to Leo XIII, he was all at once interrupted by Narcisse, who exclaimed: "Oh! my dear Abbé, just look at those statues on the colonnade." The young fellow had ordered a cup of coffee and was languidly smoking a cigar, deep once more in the subtle æsthetics which were his only preoccupation. "They are rosy, are they not?" he continued; "rosy,

with a touch of mauve, as if the blue blood of angels circulated in their stone veins. It is the sun of Rome which gives them that supra-terrestrial life; for they live, my friend; I have seen them smile and hold out their arms to me during certain fine sunsets. Ah! Rome, marvellous, delicious Rome! One could live here as poor as Job, content with the very atmosphere, and in everlasting delight at breathing it!"

This time Pierre could not help feeling surprised at Narcisse's language, for he remembered his incisive voice and clear, precise, financial acumen when speaking of money matters. And, at this recollection, the young priest's mind reverted to the castle fields, and intense sadness filled his heart as for the last time all the want and suffering rose before him. Again he beheld the horrible filth which was tainting so many human beings, that shocking proof of the abominable social injustice which condemns the greater number to lead the joyless, breadless lives of accursed beasts. And as his glance returned yet once more to the window of the Vatican, and he fancied he could see a pale hand uplifted behind the glass panes, he thought of that papal benediction which Leo XIII gave from that height, over Rome, and over the plain and the hills, to the faithful of all Christendom. And that papal benediction suddenly seemed to him a mockery, destitute of all power, since throughout such a multitude of centuries it had not once been able to stay a single one of the sufferings of mankind, and could not even bring a little justice for those poor wretches who were agonising yonder beneath the very window.



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